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*WORLDLY WISDOM*  
*OF*  
*LORD CHESTERFIELD*

*G. B. HILL*

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# LORD CHESTERFIELD'S [1694-1773] WORLDLY WISDOM

**Selections from his Letters and Characters**

*ARRANGED AND EDITED BY*

**GEORGE BIRKBECK HILL, D.C.L.**

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'Studios they appear  
Of arts that polish life.'  
*Milton.*

**Oxford**

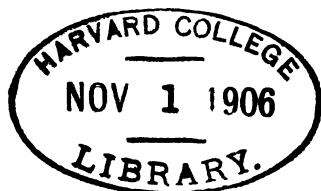
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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE great secret of education,' says Adam Smith, 'is to direct vanity to proper objects<sup>1</sup>.' If this is the great secret, then no man took more pains about it than the Earl of Chesterfield. He did more than direct it; he nourished and fanned its flame. Before the eyes of his son he dangled the most dazzling prizes—prizes which could only be won by a long and laborious course, in which no effort should be relaxed and not a single moment wasted. The boy had scarcely escaped from his cradle when his father placed himself by his side, and pointed out to him, up the long flight of steep steps, the Temple of Perfection crowning the heights. She was the goddess to whom all his vows were to be addressed; hers the Temple, lofty but not inaccessible, to which laboriously he must climb. Johnson's strong and indignant saying, by its partial truthfulness, has obscured the real nature of that long series of Letters in which Chesterfield trained his son. They did much more than teach a harlot's morals and a dancing-master's manners. In them we have slowly unfolded the whole art of living as conceived by a man of keen and polished intellect, who had not been idle in his study, and who had played a considerable part on

<sup>1</sup> *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. 1801, ii. 153.

the stage of the world. Horace Walpole describes them as a code of laws in which the folly and worthlessness of the age are reduced to a regular system. On the back of it should be written, he says, *The Whole Duty of Man adapted to the meanest Capacities*<sup>1</sup>. Johnson, sweeping though his condemnation had at first been, yet admitted 'that they might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality,' he said, 'and it should be put into the hands of every young gentleman,' for it would teach elegance of manners and easiness of behaviour<sup>2</sup>. Neither he nor Horace Walpole seems to have noticed that, much as Chesterfield dwelt on elegance of manners, it formed only one part of his system of training. Had he had a son who was naturally graceful and indolent instead of one who was awkward and laborious, he would have taken industry for his chief text; to Minerva he would have directed the lad to offer his chief sacrifices; the altar of the Graces he would have left in the background. /

Much as he trusted to the art of pleasing, he was far too able a man to think that the world, in England at all events, was to be won by mere courtliness. The hateful powers of favouritism were unhappily by no means worn out. He himself, it was said, had been baffled in his ambition through the mistake he had made when he courted not the wife but the mistress of the Prince who was afterwards to be George II. Sir Robert Walpole, with keener insight, had discovered that it would be with Queen Caroline and not with Mrs. Howard that the power was lodged<sup>3</sup>. In the reign of George III, the disgraceful ministry of the Earl of Bute, and the influence which after his fall that worthless favourite still possessed, when he was 'the something behind the throne

<sup>1</sup> Walpole's *Letters*, vi. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell's *Johnson*, iii. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Walpole's *Letters*, i. cxviii.

greater than the throne,' showed how powerful 'a King's Friend' could still be. Nevertheless, in spite of these examples, it was in Parliament that the main battle was to be fought; in Parliament that the victory was to be won. Against the House of Commons even a favourite struggled in vain. It was 'the only road to figure and fortune in this country,' said Chesterfield. 'No man can be of consequence who is not in Parliament'<sup>1</sup>. This he had seen when he was a mere lad, and for this from an early age he had trained himself with the greatest care. If such efforts had been needful for a man of his high rank and ancient lineage, how much more needful were they for one on whom was cast the reproach of illegitimacy! (Yet even by him the victory might be won, if he would take the trouble to win it) 'There is nothing in the world but poetry that is not to be acquired by application and care'<sup>2</sup>. In these letters we have set down at great length, and sometimes with tiresome iteration, those rules of life which could secure success. They were not merely precepts, but a system of strict discipline, drawn up with deliberation and steadily pursued till the child had grown into the youth, the youth into the man, and guidance had henceforth become impossible. Almost every other father, Chesterfield said, and every mother without exception who had felt half the love for their son which he had felt for his, would have ruined him by their false tenderness; 'whereas I,' as he boasted to his boy with the proud satisfaction of a conscience at ease with itself, 'always made you feel the weight of my authority, that you might one day know the force of my love'<sup>3</sup>. From his infancy he had been the object of his father's most serious attention, and not his plaything. He had consulted his real

<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, iv. 52, 273.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* iii. 294, 368.

good and not his humours or fancies. He had indulged no silly womanish fondness, had inflicted no tenderness upon him. He had aimed at bringing him to the perfection of human nature<sup>1</sup>. 'What depended upon me,' he said, when his son had reached his twentieth year, 'is executed. The little that remains undone depends singly upon you<sup>2</sup>.'

George Fox, the man of the leather breeches, as he reviewed his long ministry and proclaimed with dying voice, 'I am clear, I am fully clear,' spoke with scarcely stronger confidence than this great and fashionable nobleman. Chesterfield's aim, measured by the standard of the world, had been high. For the child he had conceived an affection so deep that we are startled to find it in a man of whom it was said with not a little truth, that 'he had so veneered his manners that though he lived on good terms with everyone he had not a single friend<sup>3</sup>.' His letters abound in such passages as the following:—'You are the principal object of all my cares, the only object of all my hopes<sup>4</sup>'; 'My greatest joy is to consider the fair prospect you have before you, and to hope and believe you will enjoy it<sup>5</sup>'; 'You will, I both hope and believe, be not only the comfort but the pride of my age; and I am sure I will be the support, the friend, the guide of your youth<sup>6</sup>'; 'As you chiefly employ, or rather wholly engross my thoughts, I see every day with increasing pleasure the fair prospect which you have before you<sup>7</sup>.' When his hearing failed him, and he found his constitution declining day by day; when he had no longer health and spirit to carry on public business, and retirement and quiet had become his only refuge, hope was still left him. 'My only remaining ambition is to be the counsellor and

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 257; ii. 272; iii. 294.

<sup>3</sup> Prior's *Life of Malone*, ed. 1860, p. 357.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* iii. 208.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* iii. 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 310.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, ii. 307.

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.* iii. 359.

minister of your rising ambition. Let me see my own youth revived in you<sup>1</sup>. When his son reached his eighteenth year, he no longer addressed him as 'Dear Boy,' but as 'My dear Friend.' He bids him write to him 'not as to a father, but without reserve as to a friend<sup>2</sup>. 'You know my tenderness,' he writes on one occasion; 'yours most tenderly,' he signs himself on another<sup>3</sup>. He spared himself no trouble in his education. In letters written in French he gave him, when he was a little child, not only instruction in that language, but also in mythology, history and geography. Even when he had been advanced to high offices of state he still found time to write. Now and then he happily dropped the instructor, and fell into playfulness. Thus when he was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland he wrote from Dublin Castle:—'You rebuke me very severely for not knowing, or at least not remembering, that you have been some time in the fifth form. Here, I confess, I am at a loss what to say for myself; for on the one hand I own it is not probable that you would not at the time have communicated an event of that importance to me; and on the other hand it is not likely that, if you had informed me of it, I could have forgotten it<sup>4</sup>.' As years went on, and the young man returned from his travels, he kept him with him for a few months, while he instructed him not only in manners but in constitutional history, and in English literature and composition.

In money matters he treated him with the greatest liberality. When at the age of eighteen he dismissed his tutor, and brought him out at Paris as a man of fashion, he gave him the establishment of the heir of a nobleman. The young fellow was to have his coach, his valet de chambre, his footman, and

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, iv. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* ii. 306; iii. 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 352; iii. 229.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* i. 220.

his valet de place; 'which by the way,' his father adds, 'is one servant more than I had<sup>1</sup>.' Fourteen years later, on his son's appointment as Minister at the Court of Dresden, Chesterfield wrote to say that he had paid his cashier £500 for his use. 'I am very apt to think,' he adds, 'that next Midsummer Day he will have the same sum and for the same use consigned to him.' Eighteen months later we find him sending him £200 for his Christmas-box<sup>2</sup>. 'I have given him,' he wrote to a friend, 'such an education that he may be of use to any Court, and I will give him such a provision that he shall be a burthen to none<sup>3</sup>.' It was not till after his son's death that he discovered that he had been for some years secretly married. Many a man would have resented the concealment. Chesterfield showed great kindness for his two orphans. He took their support and education entirely upon himself. In his will he left them £100 a year each during their minority, and in addition a sum of £10,000, which was to be invested for their benefit and divided between them on their coming of age<sup>4</sup>. His contemporaries seem to have been struck by the tenderness which these letters revealed. 'To my great surprise,' wrote Horace Walpole, 'they seem really written from the heart, not for the honour of his head<sup>5</sup>.'

The strong affection which Chesterfield showed for his son was no doubt in great part due to the ordinary feelings of a father. His wife had brought him no children. To her he was indifferent; his brothers were childless, and he had no one at home to love. But in addition to paternal love there was, I have little doubt, a strong feeling of pride. The boy was to

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, iii. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iv. 212, 236.

<sup>3</sup> Chesterfield's *Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 130.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1773, p. 318, for an extract from Chesterfield's will.

<sup>5</sup> Walpole's *Letters*, vi. 74.

illustrate the truth of his lordship's theory of education, for like Milton and Locke he had his vision of 'a wonder-working academy.' 'I have often asserted,' he wrote to his son, 'that the profoundest learning and the politest manners were by no means incompatible, though so seldom found united in the same person; and I have engaged myself to exhibit you as a proof of the truth of this assertion'.<sup>1</sup> What he proposed to do was 'to unite in him all the knowledge of a scholar with the manners of a courtier, and to join what is seldom joined in any of our countrymen, books and the world'.<sup>2</sup> Many men had deep learning, but it was tainted by pedantry, or at least unadorned by manners; many had polite manners and the turn of the world, but they were unsupported by knowledge. Some had both, but they had fallen short of perfection through the unbridled passions of their youth.<sup>3</sup> There was one man, not as he had been in his stormy youth, but as he was in his old age, who might well be taken as a model—the all-accomplished St. John.' In him the most elegant politeness and good-breeding that ever adorned courtier and man of the world were joined to the deepest erudition. 'His address pre-engages, his eloquence persuades, and his knowledge informs all who approach him.' Yet with all his noble endowments he was 'a most mortifying instance of the violence of human passions, and of the weakness of the most exalted human reason.' By the licentiousness of his youth and the extravagance of his ambition he had impaired his constitution, his character, and his fortune. Nevertheless, so splendid was the sunset of his days, that nothing better could be wished for a young man than that in time he should resemble that great man as he then was, without being what he had formerly been.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 263.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* i. 351.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 207.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* ii. 264, 290.



To attain this perfection, in which should be united virtue, learning and politeness, was Chesterfield's whole scheme of education, as thus laid down in one of his letters to his son.

'From the time that you have had life it has been the principal and favourite object of mine to make you as perfect as the imperfections of human nature will allow; in this view I have grudged no pains nor expense in your education, convinced that education more than nature is the cause of that great difference which we see in the characters of men. While you were a child I endeavoured to form your heart habitually to virtue and honour, before your understanding was capable of showing you their beauty and utility. Those principles, which you then got like your grammar rules only by rote, are now, I am persuaded, fixed and confirmed by reason. My next object was sound and useful learning. My own care first, Mr. Harte's afterwards, and of late (I will own it to your praise) your own application, have more than answered my expectations in that particular. All that remains for me then to wish, to recommend, to inculcate, to order, and to insist upon is good-breeding; without which all your other qualifications will be lame, unadorned, and to a certain degree, unavailing<sup>1</sup>.

There were then three courses in the fair edifice which Chesterfield hoped to raise—three courses which, for the most part, were to be built at separate times. The foundation was to be laid in virtue; on it was slowly to be built up a solid pile of learning, and then the graces were to be added. He wished, as he more than once said, to see united two orders of architecture. On a Tuscan base of virtue and learning was to be reared a Corinthian edifice of the graces. The Tuscan

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 246.

column by itself was coarse, clumsy and unpleasant, but it gave strength and solidity ; the Corinthian was beautiful and attractive, but without a solid foundation it would soon come to the ground. Let his son so build as to unite strength with beauty, and thus make his fabric perfect<sup>1</sup>. The efforts required were long and severe, but when two-thirds of the height had been climbed, then it was seen that the rest of the course to the Temple of Perfection lay no longer up steep flights of stone steps, but across a pleasant lawn shaded with trees and sparkling with fountains and rivulets, where flowers and luscious fruits wooed the delicate grasp, though they shunned the rude and greedy clutch. Here the graces dwelt, the graces 'who would speak in his favour to the hearts of princes, ministers and mistresses,' the graces who were always propitious to those who sacrificed to them<sup>2</sup>. If they frowned upon him, all his past labour was lost ; but if they crowned his virtue and his learning, there was nothing beyond his aims and his hopes. So admirably had he been trained up to this point, that if only their favour was added, 'he was sure to make the earliest figure and fortune in the world that ever man made.' He alone among Englishmen 'from the beginning had had his education calculated for the department of foreign affairs. He might make himself absolutely necessary to the Government, and after having received orders as a Minister abroad, might send orders in his turn as Secretary of State at home<sup>3</sup>.' All that was needed was application—incessant application—application to virtue, application to learning, application to what was even greater than both, the great art of pleasing. 'Any man of common understanding may by proper culture, care, attention, and labour make himself whatever he pleases,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 190, 262.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* ii. 159; iii. 208.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 7, 215; iii. 103.

except a good poet<sup>1</sup>—Marcel would have added, ‘and a good dancing-master<sup>2</sup>.’

Chesterfield’s plan of education was perhaps suggested to him by a passage in Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics*—a book which came out when he was at that age when fresh impressions are easily taken. The author had lamented the difficulty that there was in giving ‘ingenious and noble youths the full advantage of a just and liberal education, by uniting the scholar part with that of the real gentleman and man of breeding. They seem to have their only chance between two widely different roads; either that of pedantry and school learning, which lies amidst the dregs and most corrupt part of antient literature, or that of the fashionable illiterate world, which aims merely at the character of the fine gentleman, and takes up with the foppery of modern languages and foreign wit.’ Pedantry had so ruined true learning, and given ‘so wrong a ground of education, that there was need of redress and amendment from that excellent school which we call the world. The mere amusements of gentlemen are found more improving than the profound researches of pedants<sup>3</sup>.’ Chesterfield was bent on making his son a scholar but not a pedant, a man of pleasure but not a rake, a man of the world but not a fop.

In the strictness of the training which young Stanhope received in the first part of his course, he scarcely came off better than Frederick the Great or John Stuart Mill. The highest of all pleasures he was taught was to excel others. Where would he, a little boy of nine years old, run to hide himself, should Master Onslow, his companion at Westminster School, de-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel was the famous dancing-master at Paris. Young Stanhope was his pupil.

<sup>3</sup> Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics*, ed. 1714, i. 333-5.

servedly obtain a place above him? 'If,' his father adds, 'you have any regard for your own reputation, and a desire to please me, see that by unremitting attention and labour you may with justice be styled the *head* of the class. So may the Almighty preserve you, and bestow upon you his choicest blessings<sup>1</sup>!' So carefully had the boy been taught, almost from the cradle, that, at the age of eight, 'he had justly got the reputation of knowing much more than others of his age<sup>2</sup>.' By the time he was eighteen he had a stock of knowledge which in its variety was perhaps not surpassed by that of any young Englishman of his time. Had he flourished in the days of Competitive Examinations he would in all likelihood have taken the highest place among the Indian Civilians. For knowledge he had a natural love, and he learnt with ease. As a mere youth he showed a taste for curious books and scarce and valuable tracts. His father had to warn him 'not to understand editions and title-pages too well. It always smells of pedantry and not always of learning<sup>3</sup>.' In Greek and Latin, in history and philosophy, he had been taught by a sound scholar. French he had spoken from his earliest childhood. He had moreover studied it, and German and Italian in addition, in the capitals of the countries where those languages are spoken. He knew them in perfection, his father said; who, if he flattered other people, rarely flattered his son. At Leipzig he attended at the University courses of lectures on Justinian and Grotius. In each state where he resided he examined its history and its constitution, the treaties which it had formed, the administration of justice, the government of the Church, the religious orders, the orders of Knighthood, the military establishments, the marine, the revenue, its trade and

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 172, 237.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* i. 125.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 112, 354.

commerce,

commerce, and its coinage. He was not sent abroad to study 'the steeples, the market-places, and the signs.' These he could well leave 'to the laborious and curious researches of Dutch and German travellers.' Natural curiosities he might observe if he pleased, but they were not to take up the room of better things. 'The forms of government,' his father wrote, the 'maxims of policy, the strength or weakness, the trade and commerce of the several countries you see or hear of, are the important objects which I recommend to your most minute inquiries and most serious attention<sup>1</sup>.' There was one part of political knowledge which was only to be had by inquiry and conversation. 'The present state of every power in Europe, with regard to its strength, revenue and commerce, could not be studied in books<sup>2</sup>.' The ordinary traveller could scarcely hope to attain to a clear knowledge of these matters; but to young Stanhope, with the introductions which he carried, the sources of information were open. Everywhere he was to associate with those from whom he could acquire information. At Rome he was to mix with the Jesuits, who would both please him and improve him by their learning and address. The Venetian ambassador he was in every capital 'to frequent, for he was always better informed of the Court at which he resided than any other Minister<sup>3</sup>.'

Chesterfield stimulated his son's inquiries by the questions which from time to time he put to him, not as an examiner, but as one who sought for information. 'Can the Elector of Saxony (he asks) put any of his subjects to death for high treason, without bringing them first to their trial in some public Court of Justice?'

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 203, 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* i. 325.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 144, 295.

‘Are there any particular forms requisite for the election of a King of the Romans different from those which are necessary for the election of an Emperor?’ With the lad’s answers he seems to have been generally satisfied. ‘I was very glad to find,’ he wrote, ‘by your letter of the 12th, that you had informed yourself so well of the state of the French marine at Toulon and of the commerce at Marseilles<sup>1</sup>.’

To the study of such subjects young Stanhope was naturally well inclined. For constitutional and political history he had, according to his tutor, a peculiar turn, and his knowledge was correct and extensive. In the midst of his pleasures at Paris he begged for books relative to the laws and constitution, the colonies and commerce of England, for he knew less of them than of those of any other part of Europe<sup>2</sup>. On his first return to England from the Continent, he pursued these studies so eagerly under his father’s guidance that his lordship wrote:— ‘He labours most willingly, and is even for more of it than I desire to give him<sup>3</sup>.’

While in each country he studied the language spoken there, he did not let slip from his memory those which he had already acquired. Both in Italy and France his valet was a German; in Paris he kept up his knowledge of Italian by the help of a master. Under his English tutor he everywhere gave the morning of each day to Greek and Latin and the other branches of a learned education. ‘Solid knowledge,’ he was often told, ‘was to be the first and great foundation of his future fortune and character<sup>4</sup>,’ and solid knowledge he certainly got. His day was all mapped out for him. ‘I am edified,’ wrote his father, ‘with the allotment of your time at

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 330; iii. 79, 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 101, 109.

<sup>3</sup> Chesterfield’s *Misc. Works*, iv. 104. Cf. *Letters*, iii. 232.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, ii. 21.

Leipzig; which is so well employed from morning till night that a fool would say you had none left for yourself<sup>1</sup>. He had exhorted him 'of all the troubles not to decline the trouble of thinking'; but he left the poor lad no time for it—none at all events for meditation. He robbed him of the careless and happy freedom of youth. 'I do not suspect you,' he wrote, 'of one single moment's idleness in the whole day. Idleness is only the refuge of weak minds, and the holiday of fools. I do not call good company and liberal pleasures idleness; far from it<sup>2</sup>.' But the good company he had to frequent and the pleasures to partake of, not for their own sake, but for the polish which they would give to his manners. Not for a single moment was he to forget himself. He was always to keep his reputation in view. His spare moments were to be 'not only attentively but greedily employed.' He was to give but little time to repose. 'Six, or at most seven, hours' sleep is for a constancy as much as you or anybody can want.' However late he was in going to bed he was to rise early and at the same hour. This his father had always done even in the midst of the dissipations of his youth<sup>3</sup>. At Leipzig the poor boy was kept so constantly at his studies that Chesterfield informed a friend that 'his tutor writes me word that he has barely time to eat, drink, and sleep<sup>4</sup>.' No indulgence was shown him when he was recovering from a severe illness. On his way to Venice, where he was to have kept the Carnival, he was attacked by a violent inflammation of the lungs, and passed twelve days in great danger in a miserable post-house. 'He is now recovering at Laubach,' Chesterfield wrote to a friend, 'and by this time, I hope, out of danger<sup>5</sup>.' A week later he advised his son, as the state of his health might

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 304.<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* ii. 186.<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 310, 336.<sup>4</sup> *Misc. Works*, iv. 32.<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* iv. 90.

not yet admit of his usual application to books, 'to repair the loss by useful conversations with Mr. Harte. You may for example desire him to give you in conversation the outlines at least of Mr. Locke's Logic; a general notion of Ethics, and a verbal epitome of Rhetoric.' In the next letter he exhorts him when he arrives at Venice to make himself master of its intricate and singular form of government. 'Read, ask and see everything that is relative to it. Learn Italian as fast as ever you can'.<sup>1</sup> Three months later 'he most earnestly desires that for the next six months, at least six hours every morning uninterruptedly may be inviolably sacred to his studies with Mr. Harte.' He is pleased to learn at the beginning of the following year that, if not six, at all events five hours had been thus employed.<sup>2</sup> That the lad should make himself a good Greek scholar was one of his father's chief wishes. His tutor's report that he had read Hesiod almost critically 'most extremely pleased him,' he said. Two years later he writes:—'Let Greek without fail share some part of every day. I do not mean the Greek poets, the catches of Anacreon, or the tender complaints of Theocritus, or even the porter-like language of Homer's heroes, of whom all smatterers in Greek know a little, quote often and talk always; but I mean Plato, Aristoteles, Demosthenes and Thucydides, whom none but adepts know. It is Greek that must distinguish you in the learned world, Latin alone will not. And Greek must be sought to be retained, for it never occurs like Latin'.<sup>3</sup>

With all his stores of knowledge how superior was young Stanhope to the ordinary Englishman at the same age! 'You are now but nineteen,' the proud father wrote, 'an age at which most of your countrymen are illiberally getting drunk

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 175-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* ii. 208, 347.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 111; iii. 70.



in port at the University. You have greatly got the start of them in learning. They generally begin but to see the world at one and twenty ; you will by that age have seen all Europe. They set out upon their travels unlicked cubs ; and in their travels they only lick one another, for they seldom go into any other company. The care which has been taken of you, and, to do you justice, the care you have taken of yourself, has left you, at the age of nineteen only, nothing to acquire but the knowledge of the world, manners, address, and those exterior accomplishments <sup>1</sup>. As he considered the plan which he had formed for his son's education and the steadiness with which he had pursued it, he once more broke forth into exultation that he had not been as other parents are. He had neither spoilt him by fondling, nor had he attended only to his bodily health. He had not tried to reproduce in him all his own favourite weaknesses and imperfections. 'I hope and believe,' he wrote, 'that I have kept clear of all these errors in the education which I have given you. No weaknesses of my own have warped it, no parsimony has starved it, no rigour has deformed it. Sound and extensive learning was the foundation which I meant to lay ; I have laid it <sup>2</sup>.' He sent him what he calls his account, and rejoiced to see the balance so much in the young man's favour. 'By way of debtor and creditor it stands thus :—

Creditor : By French.  
German.  
Italian.

Debtor : To English.  
Enunciation.  
Manners.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, iv. 18. The letter in which this passage occurs is dated May 27, 1753, but it must have been written two or three years earlier. I have not been able to ascertain the exact date of Philip Stanhope's birth. On December 3, 1763, his father speaks of him as being thirty-two (*ib.* iv. 206). He was born therefore either at the end of 1730 or in 1731.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 307.

Creditor: By Latin.

Greek.

Logic.

Ethica.

History.

Jus { Naturae.  
Gentium.  
Publicum.

‘This, my dear friend, is a very true account, and a very encouraging one for you<sup>1</sup>.’

That young Stanhope should be debtor to English and enunciation, followed almost as a certainty from the education which he had received. During five of the most important years of his life he had been kept out of England. He left it when he was not more than fifteen, and he returned when he was about twenty. He was sent abroad ‘to see the manners and characters and learn the languages of foreign countries, and not to converse with English in English, which would defeat all those ends<sup>2</sup>.’ His tutor, we are told, ‘had an unhappy impediment in his speech, joined to a total want of ear,’ while ‘his style was execrable; of a new and singular kind, full of Latinisms, Gallicisms, Germanisms, and all *isms* but Anglicisms; in some places pompous, in others vulgar and low<sup>3</sup>.’ On English Chesterfield justly set the highest value. His son’s business was, he said, to be negotiation abroad and oratory in the House of Commons. What figure, his father asked, could he make in either case if his style were inelegant? ‘His trade was to speak well both in public and in private.’ Nowhere was eloquence more needful than in England. Without it neither a figure nor a fortune could be made. In speakers and in writers too a pure and elegant

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, iii. 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* ii. 295.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* iv. 177, and *Misc. Works*, i. 314.

style covered a multitude of sins. Of the truth of statements such as these, which Chesterfield is never tired of repeating, he had, he says, become convinced in his youth<sup>1</sup>. Like Johnson, 'he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion and in every company.' Eloquence, he boasted, had become so habitual to him, that he would now have 'to take some pains if he would express himself very inelegantly<sup>2</sup>.' How strange then was the ignorance of this practised and well-graced speaker, who thought that in Lausanne, in Leipzig, in Rome, in Turin, in Paris, a mastery could be gained over our noble language! Not even when the groundwork of his son's education had been completed and the Tuscan courses laid, did he allow him to stay in England more than a few months. It was in France and Germany that he resided till, at the age of three-and-twenty, he was summoned home to take his seat in the House of Commons as member for Liskeard. It was in vain that he had been urged 'to tune his tongue early to persuasion<sup>3</sup>.' It is not by letters and exhortations that such a tuning as that is accomplished. He succeeded no better than the historian of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, who, twenty years later entering Parliament by the same little Cornish borough, found himself 'condemned by prudence to acquiesce in the humble station of a mute<sup>4</sup>.' He too had long been caged abroad, and had learned to tune his throat to other notes than ours. Young Stanhope, it has been said, addressed the House for the first time on that famous night when Single-speech Hamilton made his first speech, 'and was at once perfection<sup>5</sup>.' This, however, is one of those inaccurate

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 266, 269, 283; iii. 43, 146.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 146.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 293.

<sup>4</sup> Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. 1814, i. 221.

<sup>5</sup> Horace Walpole's *Letters*, ii. 484 note 1.

statements which are made by over-hasty annotators. It was in the same month, but in different years, that the two men spoke<sup>1</sup>. It is true that Walpole mentions a Stanhope among the eight speakers on the night of Hamilton's triumph, whom he describes as 'very bad.' There was, however, more than one member of that name in the House, and it is not known that Lord Chesterfield's son ever made a second attempt<sup>2</sup>. His father encouraged him 'to harden himself by degrees, by using himself insensibly to the sound of his own voice, and to the act (trifling as it seems) of rising up and sitting down again<sup>3</sup>.' But the mortification which he had received was apparently too severe. He lost his head in the midst of his speech, and though he managed to make some kind of conclusion, yet for a while he stood silent.

In following Philip Stanhope's career till it brought him to the House of Commons, I have passed over the third and crowning part of his education. I must now return to the Corinthian temple which was so anxiously raised by the chief architect on the solid foundations of virtue and learning. Here it was that his most anxious care was employed, for here he found his materials least fitted by nature for his work. Here, too, it is that his scheme of education has caught the attention of the world. It is as the High Priest and Lawgiver of the Graces that his lordship is known. His virtues as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland are extolled by the historian; his witticisms are recounted by the collectors of anecdotes, but it is as an expounder of morals and manners that his name lives. The interest which we take in his system is greatly heightened by the odd contrast which we find in his mind, the strange

<sup>1</sup> Stanhope spoke in November, 1754 (*Letters*, iv. 80), and Hamilton in November, 1755.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield's *Misc. Works*, i. 333.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, iv. 80.

confusion of right and wrong. His aim is surely high enough, for it is 'the perfection of human nature<sup>1</sup>.' This perfection he is never weary of dinning in his son's ears. It is attained by him who is both *respectable et aimable*, whose character commands respect and whose manners win affection. It is more commonly found in France than in England. 'I have often said and do think,' he writes, 'that a Frenchman, who with a fund of virtue, learning and good sense, has the manners and good breeding of his country, is the perfection of human nature<sup>2</sup>.' The need of virtue in the perfect character is steadily maintained by him throughout, though his full conception of what constitutes virtue, or at all events of what is not inconsistent with it, is somewhat slowly unfolded. His praises of virtue, if they were culled, would make almost as pretty, though not so large, a book as his rules for elegance of behaviour. There is no reason to suspect him of hypocrisy in all this. That virtue which he understood, he wished his son steadily to pursue. When he was a mere child he told him that 'the quiet and satisfaction of the virtuous man's conscience make him cheerful by day and sleep sound of nights; he can be alone with pleasure, and is not afraid of his own thoughts<sup>3</sup>.' This lesson he often repeats. The only return for all his fondness which he desires, is the boy's 'invariable practice of virtue and indefatigable pursuit of knowledge.' Neither was the practice of virtue difficult, for 'whoever knows virtue must surely love it. It is in itself so beautiful, that it charms us at first sight, and engages us more and more upon further acquaintance.' Without it he will, he assures him, be 'most unhappy.' Writing to him at the end of the year he says:—'Many New Years indeed you may see, but happy ones you cannot see without deserving them. These virtue, honour

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 257.<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* i. 257; iii. 68.<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* i. 166.

and knowledge alone can merit, alone can procure.' Twelve months later he says:—'My true tenderness for you makes me think more of the manner than of the length of your life, and forbids me to wish it prolonged by a single day that should bring guilt, reproach, and shame upon you. Conscious virtue is the only solid foundation of all happiness.' If the reward that virtue gives is great, the sacrifice that she may demand is still greater. 'We must much rather die than do a base or criminal action.' He supports his exhortations by appeals to expediency. 'There is nothing so delicate as your moral character, and nothing which it is your interest so much to preserve pure.' 'For God's sake be scrupulously jealous of the purity of your moral character; keep it immaculate, unblemished, unsullied; and it will be unsuspected.' 'Without this purity, you can have no dignity of character; and without dignity of character it is impossible to rise in the world.' 'A man's moral character once tainted is irreparably destroyed<sup>1</sup>.'

The whole bench of bishops could scarcely have spoken better. Nevertheless we find Lord Eliot, who had travelled with young Stanhope, wondering that Chesterfield 'should have endeavoured to make his son a rascal'; while Horace Walpole described him as 'leaving a system of education to poison youth from their nursery<sup>2</sup>.' In truth, both the object which he set before his son and many of the means by which he was to attain it, were alike base. It was the favour of kings and ministers which he was to win, and in winning it he was not to hesitate to employ some of the lowest arts. He had not the excuse of poverty, the temptation of a poor man to send his lad to bow and wriggle himself into a competency. He could have made ample provision for him had he chosen.

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* i. 249, 301, 319; ii. 4, 71, 127, 307, 314, 317, 318; iii. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell's *Johnson*, iv. 333; Walpole's *Letters*, vii. 143.

That he chose for him a life of industry was no doubt so far praiseworthy, but the industry should not have been polished by vice and recommended by fawning. In his youth he had fallen under the sway of a desire, which carried to excess is most dangerous to truthfulness. To his 'passionate desire of pleasing universally,' he more than once told his son, he owed whatever figure he had made in the world. 'I began the world,' he writes, 'not with a bare desire, but with an insatiable thirst, a rage of popularity, applause and admiration. If this made me do some silly things on the one hand, it made me on the other hand do almost all the right things I did : it made me attentive and civil to the women I disliked, and to the men I despised, in hopes of the applause of both<sup>1</sup>.' How little did Johnson know of this great nobleman's character when he described him as 'the proudest man this day existing'—a man who among the right things which he had done in his youth, reckoned in his old age his attention and civility to men whom he despised in hopes of winning their worthless applause! In his case no satirist was needed to 'bare the mean heart that lurks beneath a star.' He bared it himself. It was this same desire, this love of winning applause by pleasing, that led him to publish his gross and indelicate puffs of Johnson's forthcoming Dictionary. But he mistook his man. He found that flattery might turn upon him, and prove, like Love, 'a native of the rocks.' He builds up his reputation by the anxious and minute labours of a life, and then comes a rough scholar from his garret and shatters the column at a blow. So in the play *Death for a while* suffered the monarch to keep up his state, 'infusing him with self and vain conceit'; but then—

'Comes at the last, and with a little pin,  
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!'

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, iii. 217, 374.

Rarely has there been found a man more shamelessly to avow his readiness to adopt the basest means, provided only they would bring him to the coveted end. Power and applause are the chief aims of life, and they can only be won by pleasing. 'To please is almost to prevail,' he said. 'Were I in Africa,' he told his son, 'I would pay flattery to a negro for his good-will.' At Turin he bids him 'speak advantageously of those who are best at Court behind their backs, in companies who you have reason to believe will tell them again.' At Berlin 'he is to say *des choses flatteuses* of his Prussian Majesty to those who are the most like to repeat them<sup>1</sup>.' At Paris he is 'to frequent those good houses where he had already a footing, and wriggle himself somehow or other into every other.' At St. Cloud and Versailles he is 'to insinuate and wriggle himself into favour.' Modesty is recommended 'as the only sure bait when you angle for praise<sup>2</sup>.' The aim of all Chesterfield's training is to enable his son to deal not with men's virtues and nobler qualities, but with their vices, weaknesses and meannesses.

'The *suaviter in modo* was my Law and my Prophets,' he says. 'The height of abilities is to have *volto sciolto* and *pensieri stretti*; that is a frank, open and ingenuous exterior with a prudent and reserved interior.' Every man is approached by many avenues. 'When you cannot get at him through the great one, try the serpentine ones, and you will arrive at last<sup>3</sup>.' When his son was still a boy at school he poisons his careless childhood with his lessons of worldly wisdom. 'Wherever you would persuade or prevail,' he tells him, 'address yourself to the passions; it is by them that mankind is to be taken.' On

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 330; ii. 166; iii. 31, 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 20, 155, 213.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 90, 298; iii. 130.



this text he preaches many a sermon. He bids him pry into the recesses of the heart ; to flatter people's vanity ; ' to find out their predominant excellency, if they have one, and their prevailing weakness, which everybody has, and do justice to the one, and something more than justice to the other.' He is first to engage the heart, and then he will easily dupe the understanding. ' Happy the man,' he exclaims, ' who, with a certain fund of parts and knowledge, gets acquainted with the world early enough to make it his bubble, at an age when most people are the bubbles of the world.' Summing up his directions ' for acquiring confidence by seeming frankness, and profiting of it by silent skill,' he continues, ' Above all, you must gain and engage the heart to betray the understanding.' And then with a shameless prostitution of the noble lines of the great Roman poet he adds,

' Hæc tibi erunt artes '<sup>1</sup>

That world which his son as he grew older was to make his sole study could be learnt, he tells him, only in courts and camps. What he thought of Courts he does not conceal from him. In all alike ' you must expect to meet connections without friendship, enmities without hatred, honour without virtue, appearances saved and realities sacrificed ; good manners with bad morals, and all vice and virtue so disguised that whoever has only reasoned upon both would know neither when he first met them at Court '<sup>2</sup>. Here ' a slighted valet de chambre might do you more hurt than ten men of merit would do you good ;' here ' a chamber-maid has caused revolutions '<sup>3</sup>. He who would make his way to favour should not give even a Court dog or cat reason to dislike him. He must ever be on the watch, ever be attentive to the smallest circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 226, 240, 245, 283 ; ii. 258 ; iii. 153, 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* i. 276 ; iii. 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* iii. 266, 325.

‘The trade of a courtier is as much a trade as that of a shoemaker.’ It was by practice and experience only that it could be acquired ; but in the *Maxims* of La Rochefoucault, human nature might be studied<sup>1</sup>. Not so thought that famous writer’s grandson, the virtuous and unhappy duke, one of the early victims of the Revolution. To Adam Smith he pleaded, as some apology for his grandfather’s book, ‘that he had formed his opinions of mankind in two of the worst situations of life—a court and a camp<sup>2</sup>.’

The splendour of the prize that may fall to the lot of the successful courtier was shown in the career of Lord Albemarle, ‘Colonel of a Regiment of Guards, Governor of Virginia, Groom of the Stole, and Ambassador to Paris, amounting in all to sixteen or seventeen thousand pounds a year. Was it his birth? No ; a Dutch gentleman only. Was it his estate? No ; he had none. Was it his learning, his parts, his political abilities and application? You can answer these questions as easily and as soon as I can ask them. What was it then? It was his air, his address, his manners and his graces. He pleased, and by pleasing became a favourite ; and by becoming a favourite, became all that he has been since<sup>3</sup>.’ With such glorious rewards for good breeding, who can wonder when Chesterfield declares that ‘the epithet which he should covet the most next to that of Aristides, would be that of well-bred<sup>4</sup>.’ That he places this epithet second and not before ‘The Just,’ is perhaps only due to an excessive regard to appearances. ‘There are some people,’ said John Bright, ‘who are willing to go through dirt to dignities.’ Chesterfield was one of them. Nay, he was even worse ; for he was not only willing but

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, iii. 325, 327 ; iv. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Wealth of Nations*, ed. 1811, vol. i. preface, p. xxii.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, iii. 309.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* ii. 248.

anxious that the same shameful path should be trodden by his only son. Many a man who has been unscrupulous in his pursuit of success, has nevertheless retained virtue enough to make him unwilling that his children should stain themselves as he was stained.

There have been men who, after a long trial of Chesterfield's world of courts and camps,

‘Of courts, of princes, of the tricks in war,’

teach the young, like old Belarius, that the poor man's life of quiet honesty

‘Is nobler than attending for a check,  
Richer than doing nothing for a bauble,  
Prouder than rustling in unpaid-for silk.’

Not so thought Chesterfield. George II he had known intimately. ‘For above thirty years,’ he writes, ‘I was always near his person, and had constant opportunities of observing him both in his regal robes and in his undress.’ He describes him as a man ‘in whose composition everything was little; he had all the weaknesses of a little mind without any of the virtues, or even the vices, of a great one. Avarice, the meanest of all passions, was his ruling one; and I never knew him deviate into any generous action<sup>1</sup>.’ Yet this was the man whose favour young Philip Stanhope was meanly instructed how to curry. ‘At Hanover he was to remember to speak nothing but German. He was to seem to prefer it to any other tongue; to call it his favourite language<sup>2</sup>.’ But he was to sink to even lower depths than flattering George II, for he was to flatter his Minister, the Duke of Newcastle. In the character which Chesterfield drew of that ignoble nobleman, he describes him at his levees as ‘making people of business wait two or three

<sup>1</sup> *Misc. Works*, iv. appendix, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, iii. 321, 335.



hours in the ante-chamber, while he trifled away that time with some insignificant favourites in his closet. When at last he came into his levee-room, he accosted, hugged, embraced and promised everybody with a seeming cordiality, but at the same time with an illiberal and degrading familiarity<sup>1</sup>. This statesman and buffoon, whom Smollett has so happily ridiculed in his *Humphry Clinker*, as good luck would have it, was in need of a favourite. 'He loves to have a favourite, and to open himself to that favourite; he has now no such person with him; the place is vacant, and if you have dexterity you may fill it.' In the gross flattery by which this disgraceful post is to be gained, Chesterfield carefully instructed his son<sup>2</sup>. He would have done well to warn him of the risks which sycophancy runs; how men may 'get a kick for awkward flattery.' He might have informed him of the ridiculous distress into which he himself had once fallen. 'On his being made Secretary of State,' writes Horace Walpole, 'he found a fair young lad in the ante-chamber at St. James's, who seeming much at home, the Earl concluding it was the son of Lady Yarmouth, George II's mistress, was profuse of attentions to the boy, and more prodigal still of his prodigious regard for his mamma. The shrewd boy received all his Lordship's vows with indulgence, and without betraying himself; at last he said, "I suppose your Lordship takes me for Master Louis; but I am only Sir William Russel, one of the pages"<sup>3</sup>.' Well acquainted though Chesterfield was with the mortifications to which they are exposed who fawn and flatter, and conscious as he must have been of the meanness of which they are guilty, he nevertheless describes their longings to rise as 'a right, a generous ambition to make a figure in the world'<sup>4</sup>. As one of

<sup>1</sup> *Misc. Works*, iv. appendix, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, iii. 325, 351.

<sup>3</sup> Walpole's *Letters*, i. p. cxxxiv.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, iv. 17.

the means for more surely gratifying 'that last infirmity of noble mind,' the young man is urged to adopt an air that has in it 'a mixture of benevolence, affection and unction<sup>1</sup>.' We have some hope for him as we find that his father complains that, though nature had given him a very pleasing countenance, he would not accept it. The forbidding looks which he assumed, were we trust due to the honest indignation of youth. With whatever subtlety a man of the world may attempt 'to sap the principles or taint the heart,' young men of any spirit will still maintain, in spite of all his protests, 'that art is meanness, and that versatility and complaisance are the refuge of pusillanimity and weakness<sup>2</sup>.'

No teacher was ever better satisfied with his system than ~~Chesterfield~~. In his youth he had, he owns, been under the guidance of prejudice and authority, but for many years past he had listened only to the voice of reason. He does not openly lay claim to infallibility. 'I may possibly still retain many errors,' he modestly admits. But later on he speaks with greater confidence. 'I cannot misguide you from ignorance, and you are very sure I shall not from design<sup>3</sup>.' Happily the young man does not seem to have been inclined to take his father's rules of conduct for his Law and his Prophets. On the back of some observations on men and things which he received from him, he wrote—'Excellent maxims, but more calculated for the meridian of France or Spain than of England<sup>4</sup>.' In this he agreed with Johnson, who held that 'the supple Gaul was born a parasite,' and that 'his arts in vain our rugged natives try.' The more convinced Chesterfield was of his wisdom, and the more satisfied he was with the course which he had laid down, the more anxious did he

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, iv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 136; iv. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 284.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* iv. 307.

become about its issue. After so long and arduous a voyage, for the ship to be brought in safety to the very mouth of the harbour, and then through mere carelessness to be swept past the entrance, would be unspeakably bitter. As the time grew nearer for his son's appearance upon the great stage of the world, his anxiety increased. The first impressions that he shall give of himself, he said, will be final. To a new actor great indulgence is no doubt shown ; yet the audience at once decides whether he will succeed or not. There is no appeal for character<sup>1</sup>. While friends and correspondents pleased the fond father by their reports of his son's diligence and learning, when they were closely questioned they were forced to allow that to the Graces his sacrifices had not been successful. If he failed here, he failed everywhere. Along the whole line the battle was lost.

To this, the weakest part in his son's attack on the posts and dignities of the world, Chesterfield henceforth directs almost all his attention. To strengthen it everything else must give way. 'Shut up your books as a business,' he wrote to him when he had reached his nineteenth year, 'and open them only as a pleasure ; but let the great book of the world be your serious study ; read it over and over ; get it by heart, adopt its style, and make it your own.' Happy the man who can unite the solid and the ornamental ; but if you must choose between them, without hesitation, take the ornamental. 'Make, my dear child, I conjure you, good breeding the great object of your thoughts and actions at least half the day. It is to all worldly qualifications what charity is to all Christian virtues. The dancing-master is at this time the man in all Europe of the greatest importance to you. Learn to loll genteelly. Learn even to compose your countenance occasionally to the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 78, 93, 122 ; iii. 324.

respectful, the cheerful and the insinuating. If you would be a great man in the world when you are old, shine and be showish in it while you are young.'

Few more pitiable objects can be imagined than the master of this 'wonder-working academy' just missing success by the failure of his hopeful pupil in the noble art of lolling genteelly. Nevertheless he had one consolation. There had been no neglect on his part. The great doctrine of the Graces he had preached in season and out of season. Not only had he preached it, but he had practised it. The whole lore of the art of pleasing 'he taught, but first he followed it himself.' His great scheme of perfection he had slowly and artfully unfolded. As the boy grew nearer to manhood he had gradually let him see that perfection can only be attained through polish, and that polish is best given by pleasure. Pleasure therefore became a great moral duty. To his pleasures, he tells him, he must henceforth be as attentive as to his studies. 'Pleasure is now the principal remaining part of your education.' 'Pleasure is now, and ought to be, your business.' 'Be, and be reckoned, a man of pleasure, as well as a man of business. Enjoy this happy and giddy time of your life; shine in the pleasures and in the company of people of your own age. This is all to be done, and indeed only can be done, without the least taint to the purity of your moral character.' This highly-polished and spotless character was not however easily attained; for 'few men can be men of pleasure, every man may be a rake<sup>2</sup>.' Difficult though success was, this part of education was the time rather of reward than of labour. The bargain was now to be fulfilled which Chesterfield had made two years earlier. 'I promise you, upon my word,' he had written, 'that if you will

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 252; iii. 47, 100, 127, 172, 182.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* i. 289; ii. 318; iii. 46, 68, 149.

do everything that I would have you do till you are eighteen, I will do everything that you would have me do ever afterwards<sup>1</sup>. The young man, at an age when youths nowadays have scarcely entered the University, was turned loose in Paris, 'the seat of the Graces,' with the assurance that he should have all the money that was 'necessary, not only for the figure, but for the pleasures of a gentleman<sup>2</sup>.'

At Paris, he was told, that the Graces would even court him, were he not too coy, but woman must lend her aid. Here we come upon the second great quality of baseness in Chesterfield's mind. His gospel of flattery was bad enough, but his gospel of womanhood was even worse. He had been born in those evil days which followed on the Restoration, when 'gaiety was connected with vice, and easiness of manners with laxity of principles.' Virtue had not been restored to its dignity, neither had innocence been taught not to be ashamed<sup>3</sup>. No image of a perfect woman nobly planned had ever passed before his eyes. With his blood, faith in womankind had never for one moment beaten. Neither from mother nor wife had trust in all things high come to him. He had read Shakespeare—some of his plays at all events; he had read Homer. Yet not even from books had he learned that there are women such as are not met with in the pages of Congreve, or in the Courts of George II or Louis XV. He describes them as 'only children of a larger growth<sup>4</sup>'. They have,' he goes on to say, 'an entertaining tattle, and sometimes wit; but for solid, reasoning good sense, I never in my life knew one that had it, or who

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, i. 298, 312.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 46, 66.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson's *Works*, ed. 1825, vii. 451.

<sup>4</sup> 'Men are but children of a larger growth,  
Our appetite's as apt to change as theirs,  
And full as craving too, and full as vain.'

Dryden, *All for Love*, act iv.

reasoned



reasoned or acted consequentially for four-and-twenty hours together. A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them, humours and flatters them, as he does with a sprightly, forward child. No flattery is either too high or too low for them. They will greedily swallow the highest and gratefully accept of the lowest<sup>1</sup>. When his son was but a boy of sixteen, he told him in a long letter on the art of pleasing, among 'the arcana necessary for his initiation in the great society of the world,' that 'women have in general but one object, which is their beauty; upon which scarce any flattery is too gross for them to swallow.' Writing at later dates he tell him that 'the innocent but pleasing flattery of their persons, however gross, is greedily swallowed and kindly digested. They are to be talked to as below men and above children. They have but two passions, vanity and love; these are their universal characteristics<sup>2</sup>.'

However contemptible might be the character of women, yet their power was great, and great in three ways. They can recommend, they can indirectly instruct, and they can refine. From the weakness of men they have influence in every Court. 'It is they who put a young fellow in fashion even with the men. They absolutely stamp every man's character in the *beau monde*, and make it either current, or cry it down and stop it in payments.' He who has learnt to win their favour has gone a great way in learning how to win the favour of kings. 'Princes in general are about the pitch of women, bred up like them; and are to be addressed and gained in the same manner. They always see, they seldom weigh.' It is by the same arts that mistresses and courts are gained. It is in a man's pleasures that he

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* i. 285; ii. 67, 173, 300.

learns

learns to become a successful negotiator<sup>1</sup>. It is by his pleasures, too, that he gains that polish, 'that amiable and engaging *je ne sais quoi*, which, as some philosophers have unintelligibly enough said of the soul, is all in all, and all in every part; it should shed its influence over every word and action<sup>2</sup>.' Against the girls of Corinth the athlete of old was warned, but no perfect building of Chesterfield's Corinthian order could be raised without the aid of women lost to virtue. The purity of the moral character escaped however from the least taint so long as it was with women of fashion that a young man sinned. This precise father could not, he says, suppose his son capable of conversing with any others<sup>3</sup>. We call to mind the splendid passage in which Pope celebrates the triumph of corruption, and tells how

'Vice is undone, if she forgets her birth;  
And stoops from angels to the dregs of earth.'

The first hint of the great duty of licentiousness was given by this perfection-loving but over-ambitious father, when his son was about eighteen years of age. 'There are some expressions,' he writes, 'both in French and English, and some characters which have, I dare say, misled many young men to their ruin. *Une honnête débauche, une jolie débauche; an agreeable rake, a man of pleasure*. Do not think that this means debauchery and profligacy; nothing like it. It means, at most, the accidental and unfrequent irregularities of youth and vivacity, in opposition to dulness, formality, and want of spirit. A *commerce galant* insensibly formed with a woman of fashion; a glass of wine or two too much, unwarily taken in the warmth and joy of good company, or some innocent frolic by which nobody is injured, are the utmost bounds of that life

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 17, 57, 260; iii. 227.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 185.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* ii. 173.

of pleasure which a man of sense and decency, who has a regard for his character, will allow himself, or be allowed by others<sup>1</sup>. Having once started the subject, he never lets it drop till the young man has fully graduated in the great University of the world. Again and again he touches on the pleasures *d'un honnête homme*. He sends him an extract from a letter in French, which he had received, he said, from a lady in Venice; but which very likely he wrote himself in London. That he did play on him tricks of this sort he himself avowed in a letter to a friend<sup>2</sup>. He makes this unknown correspondent say:—‘Un arrangement avec quelque femme de condition et qui a du monde, quelque Madame de Lursay, est précisément ce qu’il lui faut<sup>3</sup>.’ What he means by *un arrangement* he explains a few months later. ‘*Un arrangement*, which is in plain English a gallantry, is at Paris a part of a woman of fashion’s establishment, as her house, table, coach, &c. *Un arrangement honnête sied bien à un galant homme*<sup>4</sup>.’ He recounts how he himself, in the awkwardness of youth, with the rust of Cambridge still about him, had when abroad been kindly taken in hand by a fine woman of fashion. She had had pity on his timidity, and calling up some of her friends had said:—‘Savez-vous que j’ai entrepris ce jeune homme, et qu’il le faut rassurer? Il lui faut nécessairement une passion, et s’il ne m’en juge pas digne nous lui en chercherons quelque autre.’ He advises his son to consult ‘veteran women of condition, who have generally been gallant, but within certain decent bounds. Their gallantries have

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 164.

<sup>2</sup> *Misc. Works*, iii. 239.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, ii. 276; iii. 131: ‘Madame de Lursay is a character in Crébillon’s *Égarements du cœur et de l’esprit*.’ Mahon’s *Chesterfield Letters*, i. 365. Macaulay describes Crébillon as ‘that abject thing, a scribbler as licentious as Louvet and as dull as Rapin.’ *Essays*, ed. 1874, ii. 108.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, iii. 28, 108.

taught both them and their admirers good breeding; without which they could keep up no dignity<sup>1</sup>.

The full infamy of his advice is reached when he bids his son attempt to corrupt a young lady who had lately been married. 'On m'assure que Madame de Blot, sans avoir des traits, est jolie comme un cœur, et que nonobstant cela elle s'en est tenue jusqu'ici scrupuleusement à son mari, quoiqu'il y ait déjà plus d'un an qu'elle est mariée. Elle n'y pense pas; il faut décrotter cette femme-là. Décrottez-vous donc tous les deux réciproquement<sup>2</sup>.' He returns frequently to this vile suggestion, and others like it. The young man apparently pleaded his want of impudence. 'What do you mean,' the father replies, 'by your 'Si j'osais? qu'est-ce qui vous empêche d'oser? Soyez convaincu que la femme la plus sage se trouve flattée, bien loin d'être offensée, par une déclaration d'amour faite avec politesse et agrément.' He points out the glorious career of the Duke de Richelieu, 'now *Maréchal, Cordon bleu, Gentilhomme de la Chambre*, twice ambassador, &c.' His success was altogether due to his early intrigues with women of the first distinction, which gave him his manners, graces, and address. 'Strip him of them, and he will be one of the poorest men in Europe.' Chesterfield admits that 'the gallantry of high life is not strictly justifiable; nevertheless the heart is not corrupted by it<sup>3</sup>.' What a different lesson was taught by the Scottish peasant, a man laid low and stained by thoughtless follies, but nevertheless one by whom 'the native

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 322, 324, 346.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 159. Sir John Hawkins (*Life of Johnson*, ed. 1787, p. 181) tells how Chesterfield, once presuming to make love to a married lady of rank, was ordered at once 'to quit her house, with this menace: "Think yourself well off, my lord, that for this affront I do not order my servants to push you headlong out of doors."'

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, ii. 349; iii. 189, 309.

feelings strong, the guileless ways' were ever honoured. He too addresses a young man who is about to try the world; he too considers the effect on the character of Chesterfield's refining pleasures, and says:—

'I wave the quantum o' the sin,  
The hazard of concealing;  
But, och! it hardens a' within,  
And petrifies the feeling.'

How wisely too does he oppose the whole aim of Chesterfield's endeavours, not neglecting prudence, industry and thrift, but directing them to their proper end.

'To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,  
Assiduous wait upon her;  
And gather gear by ev'ry wile  
That's justified by honour:  
Not for to hide it in a hedge,  
Nor for a train-attendant;  
But for the glorious privilege  
Of being independent.'

However strongly we abhor one side of Chesterfield's teaching, nevertheless we are touched at times by the restless attention with which even in the smallest matters he directed his son's education. 'Where you are concerned,' he wrote to him, 'I am the insatiable man in Horace, who covets still a little corner more to complete the figure of his field. I dread every little corner that may deform mine, in which I would have (if possible) no one defect<sup>1</sup>.' His boy was to him what a few years earlier the Prussian army had been to the father of Frederick the Great. 'The King,' writes Mr. Carlyle, 'watched over it like an Argus, with eyes that reached everywhere. Discipline shall be as exact as Euclid—short of perfection we do not stop. Discipline and ever better discipline; enforce-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, ii. 107.

ment of the rule in all points, improvement of the rule itself where possible, were the great Drill-sergeant's continual care. Daily had some loop fallen, which might have gone ravelling far enough ; but daily was he there to pick it up again, and keep the web unrent and solidly progressive<sup>1</sup>. So, too, Chesterfield was ever on the watch for the slightest failing, and was ever trying, whenever he discovered one, to find for it its proper remedy.

With the result of his anxious training of twenty years, it was scarcely possible that he should not have been disappointed, even if his son had been a far abler man than nature had made him. He had pitched his hopes unreasonably high. There were but two Secretaries of State, and he was bent on making his boy one of them. His failure, great though it was compared with his expectations, has been exaggerated, through the delight which mankind takes in contrasts. Young Stanhope has been represented as a cub who could not be licked into any kind of shape. He had passed through the world, so far as we know, undistinguished by peculiarities of any kind. In all probability it was not till his father's letters were published that anyone gave a thought to his manners. Then, no doubt, everyone who had ever seen him at once began to measure him in his memory, not by the standard of an ordinary English gentleman, but of the Graces. The grossness of his manners was called to mind. Horace Walpole has recorded a story of his behaviour on his first return from France, which must be untrue. Whatever credit I might have been inclined to give it as coming from him, at once disappeared when I discovered that he had copied it from the *Gentleman's Magazine*. It was one of those 'wandering lies' which were sure to spring up, and to be accepted as true, in spite of their inherent incredibility.

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's *Friedrich*, ed. 1858, i. 577.

'Lord Chesterfield,' it was said, 'had invited several of his friends to dinner, with a view probably of displaying the accomplishments of his son. The youth was unfortunately so delighted with a cherry tart, that after he had demolished the crust and fruit, unwilling to lose any of the juice, he cleared his plate by lapping or licking it up, so that the chin, mouth and lips were besmeared. Never perhaps was his father more mortified. He recovered himself, however, so far as to tell his son's servant that his master wanted shaving<sup>1</sup>.' For some years previously young Stanhope, in his residence abroad, had mixed with the highest society in the various countries in which he had stayed. The last seven months he had spent in Paris, on terms of great intimacy with Lord Chesterfield's friends. He had been the guest of some of the finest ladies, and of the English ambassador. It is absurd to suppose that a young man fresh from such society would lap up his sirup as if he were a ploughboy. What he wanted was not the ordinary decencies of life, but that easy and graceful manner which art can improve, but which nature alone can give. That there was nothing gross in his behaviour, is shown by the description which his father gave of him at this time. 'My young man,' he wrote to a friend, 'has been with me here this fortnight, and in most respects I am very well satisfied with him; his knowledge is sound and extensive, and by all that I have yet observed his heart is what I could wish it. But for his air and manners Paris has still a great deal to do. He stoops excessively, which I have known *some very pretty fellows* do, though he dances very well; and as to manners, the easy and genteel turn *d'un honnête homme* is yet very much wanting<sup>2</sup>.' To dance well in those days implied a great deal. 'Que de choses dans un me-

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1774, p. 320, and *Philobiblon*, xi. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Misc. Works*, iv. 353.

nuet!' had exclaimed his dancing-master in a transport of enthusiasm. It was the famous Marcel under whom he had studied that art—Marcel, who had said to one of his English pupils, 'Monsieur, on saute dans les autres pays; on ne danse qu'à Paris'.<sup>1</sup> If Stanhope danced well enough to win Lord Chesterfield's praises, he could not have been remarkable for his awkwardness.

Like his father, he had a short, thick clumsy figure; perhaps too he had his 'shrill scream'.<sup>2</sup> Johnson, so the story ran, seeing him in Dodsley's shop, 'was so much struck with his awkward manners and appearance, that he could not help asking Mr. Dodsley who he was'.<sup>3</sup> Boswell, who had met him abroad, thus writes of him:—'He has been called dull, gross, and awkward; but I knew him at Dresden, when he was envoy to that Court, and though he could not boast of the *graces*, he was in truth a sensible, civil, well-behaved man'.<sup>4</sup> Though he failed in Parliament, he was not unsuccessful as a diplomatist.

When he was resident at Hamburgh, he more than once won the king's approval by his dispatches<sup>5</sup>. He had risen to be Envoy Extraordinary to Saxony when he was cut off by death at the age of thirty-seven. Had he recovered from his illness he would have received 'the character and the pay of Plenipotentiary'.<sup>6</sup> It is highly probable that his life was shortened by his early training. In his boyhood, if he had not been overworked, he had been robbed of that joyous freedom which is one of the foundations of health. He had had a dangerous attack on the lungs, from which he had not long

<sup>1</sup> Mahon's *Chesterfield's Letters*, ii. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Hervey's *Memoirs of George II*, i. 96, and *Diary of Mary, Countess Cowper*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson's *Works*, ed. 1787, xi. 209.

<sup>4</sup> Boswell's *Johnson*, i. 266.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters*, iv. 89, 105, 118, 175.

<sup>6</sup> Supplement to Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, p. 116.

recovered,



recovered, when he was exhorted by the very man who should have restrained him, to indulge freely in licentious pleasures. At the age of twenty he was described by his father as a dissipated young fellow<sup>1</sup>. His health soon began to fail, and twice at least Chesterfield wrote to urge him to be moderate in his indulgences<sup>2</sup>. He seems to have been too fond also of the pleasures of the table, and was 'encumbered with flesh<sup>3</sup>.' He suffered from asthma, and its common companion, gout. His disorders ended in dropsy, which quickly carried him off. He had been told to make pleasure his business; he found out too late that it is a business in which a man may become a poor and broken bankrupt. He might perhaps have lived longer had he been allowed to take part in those field-sports which his father had heartily despised, 'as the resources of little minds, who either do not think, or do not love to think, and as infinitely below the honest and industrious professions of a tailor and a shoemaker<sup>4</sup>.'

How deeply Lord Chesterfield was affected by his son's death we do not know. There is no allusion to his loss in his published letters. It had been a part of his philosophy, he boasted, 'to make the best of the best, and to never make bad worse by fretting. We have but a bad bargain, God knows, of this life, and patience is the only way not to make bad worse<sup>5</sup>.' He had bodily sufferings of his own to bear, in which would be lost much of the sorrow which might otherwise have been felt. Writing to a friend, he said:—'Nature has laid very heavy taxes upon old age, and I must pay my share of them, be it what it will<sup>6</sup>.' Ten years before his son's death, and fifteen years before his own, he was 'often wishing

<sup>1</sup> *Misc. Works*, iv. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, iv. 174, and Mahon's ed. v. 474.

<sup>3</sup> Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, p. 181.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, ii. 26, 154; iii. 220.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* iv. 180, 234.

<sup>6</sup> *Misc. Works*, iv. 323.

for the end of the wretched remnant of his life ; that fag-end from which he could expect no pleasure, and others no utility<sup>1</sup>.'

In the midst of his fine house and gardens at Blackheath, 'he was but the ghost of his former self, walking there in silence and solitude as becomes a ghost.' By his deafness he had long been cut off from social life, 'the only rational pleasure which at his age he could have ;' so that, he continues, 'I read my eyes out every day that I may not hang myself<sup>2</sup>.' He was crippled with pains in all his limbs, and for a time was troubled with the thought that it was a base plebeian disorder which attacked him. 'I wish,' he wrote, 'it were a declared gout, which is the distemper of a gentleman ; whereas the rheumatism is the distemper of a hackney-coachman or chairman, who are obliged to be out in all weathers and at all hours.' He is too honest to fall foul of nature for his sufferings. 'I cannot accuse her,' he said, 'for I abused her<sup>3</sup>.' He was not troubled in his conscience for his past life. He had done nothing unworthy of the perfection of human nature, as he understood it. 'I do not regret,' he told his son, 'the time that I passed in pleasures ; they were seasonable, they were the pleasures of youth, and I enjoyed them while young<sup>4</sup>.'

Besides his philosophy and his ailments, he had another and a better support under the blow which had fallen upon him, in the hopes which he had formed for the child who was to succeed him in his title and estates. He began by his letters to train him as he had trained his son, and he showed the same kindness and the same mixture of the knowledge and ignorance of human nature. As he had chosen an awkward pedant, a man who delighted in a pompous style, to prepare his son for the life of a statesman, so he chose a licentious and

<sup>1</sup> *Letters* iv. 125, 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iv. 182, 272.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* iv. 132, 233.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* i. 315.

showy hypocrite to bring up his godson in a life of virtue. He would not put the child, he said, in a public school, 'where religious and moral obligations are never heard of nor thought of;' so he placed him under the care of the notorious Dr. Dodd, 'a man,' as he described him, 'of unexceptional character and very great learning<sup>1</sup>.' Here Chesterfield's life-long insincerity bore its natural fruit; he had so little cleared his own mind of cant, that he could not detect the cant of others. Had it come to him in the familiar shape of a courtier he would, no doubt, have seen through it, but in a new form it escaped his detection. It was in vain that Dodd had sought for admission into the Literary Club. 'He had canted all his life,' said Johnson; the men of that Club, if they had not 'pried into the recesses of the heart,' had quick eyes and quick ears for cant. Among them was Dr. Douglas, 'the scourge of impostors, the terror of quacks,' and Oliver Goldsmith, who had written of Douglas,

'But now he is gone, and we want a detector,  
Our Dodds shall be pious, our Kenricks shall lecture<sup>2</sup>.'

How different was the choice which had been made only three years earlier of a tutor for the young Duke of Buccleuch. Charles Townshend, a greater wit than Chesterfield, a man who, according to Hume, 'passed for the cleverest man in England,' 'the most brilliant and versatile of mankind,' as Macaulay describes him, was so struck with Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that he resolved to put the young nobleman under the charge of that great philosopher. For three years the master and pupil lived together abroad, and formed a friendship which was only broken by death<sup>3</sup>. Had Chesterfield

<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield's *Letters to his Godson*, 2nd ed. pp. 323, 363.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell's *Johnson*, iii. 139, n. 4, 280.

<sup>3</sup> Dugald Stewart's *Life of Adam Smith*, ed. 1811, pp. 58, 73.

known mankind and not merely 'the world,' he too might have covered himself and his godson with honour by selecting a man whose fame would have imparted radiance to their ancient lineage.

How ignorant he was of that human nature which he professed to have so deeply studied, he showed also in the kind of instruction which he thought fit for a child. To his son, a little boy of seven or eight years old, he had given some verses to commit to memory about 'ravished eyes' and seeking 'a nymph more kind.' To his godson, when he was not yet six, he sent a copy of Dryden's noble lines on the vanity of life. At an age when the child should have been singing of Jack and Jill and Poor Cock Robin, he was bidden to get by heart

'I'm tired of seeking for this chymick gold,

Which fools us young, and beggars us when old<sup>1</sup>.'

Who can wonder that when he grew up to manhood his talk was of bullocks?

These letters come to a close when young Stanhope was but fourteen. Had they been continued till he reached manhood, in all likelihood we should have seen the whole scheme of perfection once more unfolded; for his godfather, with the help of the learned and pious Dodd, was bent 'on guiding him to the highest pitch of perfection that imperfect human nature will allow<sup>2</sup>.' He strove to give him, as he had striven to give his son, 'learning enough to distinguish himself in Parliament, and manners to shine in Courts.' As formerly he had left the learning to Mr. Harte, so now he left it to Dr. Dodd. 'The manners,' he said, 'I shall undertake myself, from my long experience and knowledge of the ways of the world<sup>3</sup>.' When the child was but nine years old, he began to

<sup>1</sup> 'I'm tired *with waiting*,' &c. *Aurengzebe*, act iv. sc. I.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield's *Letters to his Godson*, pp. 263, 304.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* p. 259.

address

address to him a series of fourteen letters ‘upon the *Duty*, the *Utility*, and the *Means* of pleasing.’ These he was to read twice over and to keep by him. He bids the little urchin, whose mouth perhaps was smeared with toffee, ‘to have always, as much as he could, that *air de douceur* and gentleness in his countenance and *abond*, which never fails to make favourable impressions.’ He is told that ‘fools and knaves are too great a majority to contend with, and that their numbers make them formidable. Show them a reserved civility, and let them not exist with regard to you.’ He is ‘to aim at the best society—those societies of men or women, or a mixture of both, where great politeness, good breeding and decency, though perhaps not always virtue, prevail. Women of fashion and character (I do not mean absolutely unblemished) are a necessary ingredient in the composition of good company.’ ‘Every woman is to be addressed with flattery. Make the dose strong, it will be greedily swallowed.’ The old receipt is given for pleasing universally. ‘Address yourself to the passions and weaknesses of men and women, gain their hearts, and then let their reason do its worst against you.’ In whatever pleasures he engages, though perhaps not of a very laudable kind, he is to take care to preserve a great personal dignity. ‘Let your moral character of honesty and honour be unblemished, and even unsuspected; I have known some people dignify even their vices, first by never boasting of them, and next by not practising them in an illiberal and indecent manner<sup>1</sup>.’ In the last of his letters he touches on pleasure in just the same way that he had touched on it to his son, when he was still a boy. To him he had written:— ‘Whatever your pleasures may be, I neither can nor shall envy you them, as old people are sometimes suspected by

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, pp. 165, 172, 173, 176, 183, 190.

young people to do; and I shall only lament if they should prove such as are unbecoming a man of honour, or below a man of sense<sup>1</sup>. In like manner he wrote to his godson:—‘I would have you lead a youth of pleasures; but then, for your sake, I would have them elegant pleasures, becoming a man of sense and a gentleman; they will never sully nor disgrace your character<sup>2</sup>.’ Had he carried on the correspondence a few years longer he would have shown, we may well believe, that it is not unbecoming in a man of sense and a gentleman to corrupt his neighbour’s wife, provided that she is a woman of fashion and he does it elegantly.

He had formed his scheme of the whole duty of man deliberately. It was the combined result of his reading, of his observations of life, and of his reflections. It was no specious justification for pleasures which in his heart he felt to be disgraceful. There is nothing to show that the approach of death brought him nearer to the light. The closing years, with their weaknesses and troubles, may soften a man who had known the better path, but who had left it through passion, and in his wanderings had become hardened. They leave him untouched whose understanding has been at fault. They may change the heart, but they can do nothing for the head.

Base though the purpose is which runs through his *Letters to his Son*, they contain nevertheless many a lesson of shrewdness and some even of wisdom. He is the Polonius, the degenerate Polonius, of the eighteenth century—‘a man bred in Courts, exercised in business, stored with observation, confident of his knowledge, and proud of his eloquence<sup>3</sup>.’ With his wisdom there is mingled so much that is mean, that among young men the nobler minds would be apt to reject what

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to his Son*, i. 293.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters to his Godson*, p. 308.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson’s *Shakespeare*, ed. 1765, viii. 183.

is good in their scorn of what is bad. They would throw the book from them in just indignation. Others, who kept a weaker hold on truth, seduced by the splendid rewards which attend on the noble art of universally pleasing, would be tempted to sacrifice sincerity on the altar of the Graces. These *Letters*, therefore, are not likely to be studied with profit by the young. Carlyle, who read them at the age of twenty, spoke of them with great contempt. 'This Lord's directions concerning washing the face and paring the nails,' he said, 'are indeed very praiseworthy; but the flattery, the dissimulation and paltry cunning that he is perpetually recommending, leave one little room to regret that Chesterfield was not his father<sup>1</sup>.' Nevertheless there was in them a lesson of conciliation, which, studied and mastered, would have rendered life far happier both for Carlyle and for all about him. Of that *suaviter in modo* which formed the text of many of his lordship's sermons the rugged Scotchman knew nothing.

With men of riper years, who take a delight in the study of character, and who have a lively perception of the excellencies of style, Chesterfield is likely to be a favourite author. Nevertheless it was maintained by Macaulay—no mean judge of the merits of the writers of the eighteenth century—that 'the utmost that can be said of the letters is that they are the letters of a cleverish man; and there are not many which are entitled even to that praise.' 'Lord Chesterfield,' he asserted on another occasion, 'stands much lower in the estimation of posterity than he would have done if they had never been published<sup>2</sup>.' Had they never been published posterity, I believe, would have estimated him not by his

<sup>1</sup> *Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. by C. E. Norton, i. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, ed. 1877, i. 338; and Macaulay's *Essays*, ed., 1874, ii. 105.

reputation as a statesman or an orator, or a wit, but by the indelible marks set upon him by Johnson. He would have been the wit among lords; the patron who supplanted the garret in a famous line<sup>1</sup>—the patron who delayed his notice till the uncourtly scholar was indifferent, and could not enjoy it; was solitary, and could not impart it; was known, and did not want it. What does posterity know of Lord Carteret? Yet Chesterfield said of him, ‘When he dies the ablest head in England dies too, take it for all in all<sup>2</sup>.’ What does it know of Charles Townshend, that luminary which arose while the western horizon was in a blaze with the descending glory of Chatham, and for his hour became lord of the ascendant?<sup>3</sup> That Chesterfield lives not merely in the pages of our histories, but in our memory and our thoughts, is greatly due to these letters. They are far more than the productions of a cleverish man. However much they offend by their immorality, yet surely they bear the certain marks of genius. Landor thought him in point of style one of the best of our writers<sup>4</sup>. Voltaire praised him for his gracefulness, in which quality, he said perhaps no Englishman surpassed him<sup>5</sup>.

Without his *Letters*, Lord Chesterfield’s reputation as a literary man would have rested on his fugitive pieces—those

<sup>1</sup> ‘In the tenth satire, one of the couplets upon the vanity of wishes even for literary distinction stood thus:—

“Yet think what ills the scholar’s life assail,  
Toil, envy, want, the *garret*, and the jail.”

But after experiencing the uneasiness which Lord Chesterfield’s fallacious patronage made him feel, he dismissed the word *garret* from the sad group, and in all the subsequent editions the line stands:—

“Toil, envy, want, the *Patron* and the jail.”

Boswell’s *Johnson*, i. 264.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, iv. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Burke’s *Speech on American Taxation*, Clarendon Press edition, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Forster’s *Life of W. S. Landor*, ed. 1874, i. 350.

<sup>5</sup> *Œuvres de Voltaire*, ed. 1821, lxi. 175.



light and often frivolous essays which he contributed to the *World* and other journals. They have long sunk into the neglect which they deserved. He who would know him at his best must read his *Letters*, and not be content with selections from them. There is a charm in the epistolary style which is lost in extracts. Nevertheless 'a very pretty book,' it has been thought, might be made by a judicious choice of the most striking passages. This task I have taken in hand at the request of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press. I have been glad to have the opportunity of stating at some length the views which I have formed of this famous nobleman, 'the undisputed sovereign of wit and fashion.' Much that I had wished to say I have been forced to omit through fear of unduly extending this Preface. I may perhaps in another Essay take up the subject again, and complete my task.

G. B. H.

OXFORD, *July* 9, 1890.

# LORD CHESTERFIELD.

[1694-1773.]

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## Absence of Mind.

No man is *distract* with the man he fears, or the woman he loves ; which is a proof that every man can get the better of that *distraction*, when he thinks it worth his while to do so ; and, take my word for it, it is always worth his while. For my own part, I would rather be in company with a dead man, than with an absent one ; for if the dead man gives me no pleasure, at least he shows me no contempt ; whereas the absent man, silently indeed, but very plainly, tells me that he does not think me worth his attention. Besides, can an absent man make any observations upon the characters, customs, and manners of the company ? No. He may be in the best companies all his life-time (if they will admit him, which, if I were they, I would not) and never be one jot the wiser. I never will converse with an absent man ; one may as well talk to a deaf one. It is, in truth, a practical blunder, to address ourselves to a man, who we see plainly, neither hears, minds, nor understands us. Moreover, I aver that no man

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is, in any degree, fit for either business or conversation, who cannot, and does not, direct and command his attention to the present object, be that what it will.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 216.*

. . .

You have often seen, and I have as often made you observe L... 's<sup>1</sup> distinguished inattention and awkwardness. Wrapped up, like a Laputan, in intense thought, and possibly, sometimes, in no thought at all; which, I believe, is very often the case of absent people; he does not know his most intimate acquaintance by sight, or answers them as if he were at cross-purposes. He leaves his hat in one room, his sword in another, and would leave his shoes in a third, if his buckles, though awry, did not save them: his legs and arms, by his awkward management of them, seem to have undergone the *Question extraordinaire*; and his head, always hanging upon one or other of his shoulders, seems to have received the first stroke upon a block. I sincerely value and esteem him for his parts, learning, and virtue; but, for the soul of me, I cannot love him in company.

*Ib. ii. 219.*

. . .

Be minutely attentive to the circumstances of time, place, and persons, or you may happen to offend where you intend to please, for people in what touches themselves, make no allowance for slips or inadvertencies. To be *distract* in company is unpardonable, and implies a contempt for it, and is not less ridiculous than offensive. There is little difference between a dead man and a *distract*. What difference

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<sup>1</sup> See *post*, under *A Respectable Hottentot*.

there

there is, is entirely to the advantage of the former, whose insensibility everybody sees is not voluntary. Some people most absurdly affect *Distraction* as thinking that it implies deep thought and superior wisdom, but they are greatly mistaken, for everybody knows, that if natural it is a great weakness of the mind, and an egregious folly if affected. A wise man instead of not using the senses which he has, would wish them all to be multiplied, in order to see and hear at once whatever is said or done in company.

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*Letters to his Godson, p. 170.*

## Actors.

What is the constant and just observation, as to all actors upon the stage? Is it not, that those who have the best sense always speak the best, though they may happen not to have the best voices?

*Letters to his Son, ii. 15.*

## Affectation.

Carefully avoid all affectation either of mind or body. It is a very true and a very trite observation that no Man is ridiculous for being what he really is, but for affecting to be what he is not<sup>1</sup>. No Man is awkward by nature, but by affecting to be genteel; and I have known many a man of common sense pass generally for a fool, because he affected a degree of wit that God had denied him.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 193.*

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<sup>1</sup> 'Monsieur de la Rochefoucault very justly observes that people are never ridiculous from their real but from their affected characters.' Chesterfield's *Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 87.

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The blockhead who affects wisdom because nature has given him dulness, becomes ridiculous only by his adopted character ; whereas he might have stagnated unobserved in his native mud, or perhaps have engrossed deeds, collected shells<sup>1</sup>, and studied heraldry or logic with some success.

*Miscellaneous Works, ii. 276.*

### **The Affectation of any Single Virtue.**

Suspect, in general, those who remarkably affect any one virtue; who raise it above all others, and who, in a manner, intimate that they possess it exclusively. I say suspect them; for they are commonly impostors: but do not be sure that they are always so; for I have sometimes known saints really religious, blusterers really brave, reformers of manners really honest, and pruders really chaste.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 301.*

### **The Ancients.**

Some men, to show their learning, or often from the prejudices of a school-education, where they hear of nothing else, are always talking of the Ancients, as something more than men, and of the Moderns as something less. They are never without a Classic or two in their pockets; they

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson shared in this contempt for the collectors of natural curiosities, though at the same time he admitted their usefulness. 'Collections of this kind,' he said, 'are of use to the learned, as heaps of stones and piles of timber are necessary to the architect. To mean understandings it is sufficient honour to be numbered amongst the lowest labourers of learning, but different abilities must find different tasks. To hew stone would have been unworthy of Palladio, and to have rambled in search of shells and flowers had but ill suited with the capacity of Newton.' *The Rambler*, No. 83. The days of Darwin were yet to come.

stick

stick to the old good sense ; they read none of the modern trash ; and will show you plainly, that no improvement has been made, in any one art or science, these last seventeen hundred years. I would by no means have you disown your acquaintance with the Ancients ; but still less would I have you brag of an exclusive intimacy with them. Speak of the Moderns without contempt, and of the Ancients without idolatry ; judge them all by their merits, but not by their ages : and, if you happen to have an Elzevir classic in your pocket, neither show it nor mention it.

*Letters to his Son, i. 320.*

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## **Appearances: men governed by them.**

Mankind, as I have often told you, is more governed by appearances, than by realities : and, with regard to opinion, one had better be really rough and hard, with the appearance of gentleness and softness, than just the reverse. Few people have penetration enough to discover, attention enough to observe, or even concern enough to examine, beyond the exterior ; they take their notions from the surface, and go no deeper ; they commend, as the gentlest and best-natured man in the world, that man who has the most engaging exterior manner, though possibly they have been but once in his company. An air, a tone of voice, a composure of countenance to mildness and softness, which are all easily acquired, do the business ; and without farther examination, and possibly with the contrary qualities, that man is reckoned the gentlest, the modestest, and the best-natured man alive. Happy the man who, with a certain fund of parts and knowledge, gets acquainted with the world early enough to make it his bubble, at an age, when

most

## Appearances of Religion.

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most people are the bubbles of the world ! for that is the common case of youth. They grow wiser, when it is too late : and, ashamed and vexed at having been bubbles so long, too often turn knaves at last. Do not therefore trust to appearances and outside yourself, but pay other people with them ; because you may be sure that nine in ten of mankind do, and ever will, trust to them.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 175.*

### Appearances of Religion and Morality.

I shall confine myself, in this letter, to the decency, the utility, and the necessity, of scrupulously preserving the appearances of religion and morality. When I say the appearances of religion, I do not mean that you should talk or act like a Missionary, or an Enthusiast, nor that you should take up a controversial cudgel against whoever attacks the sect you are of ; this would be both useless, and unbecoming your age : but I mean that you should by no means seem to approve, encourage, or applaud, those libertine notions, which strike at religions equally, and which are the poor threadbare topics of half Wits, and minute Philosophers. Even those who are silly enough to laugh at their jokes, are still wise enough to distrust and detest their characters : for, putting moral virtues at the highest, and religion at the lowest, religion must still be allowed to be a collateral security, at least, to Virtue ; and every prudent man will sooner trust to two securities than to one. Whenever, therefore, you happen to be in company with those pretended *esprits forts*, or with thoughtless libertines, who laugh at all religion, to show their wit, or  
disclaim

disclaim it, to complete their riot ; let no word or look of yours intimate the least approbation ; on the contrary, let a silent gravity express your dislike : but enter not into the subject, and decline such unprofitable and indecent controversies. Depend upon this truth, that every man is the worse looked upon, and the less trusted, for being thought to have no religion ; in spite of all the pompous and specious epithets he may assume, of *esprit fort*, free-thinker, or moral philosopher ; and a wise atheist (if such a thing there is) would, for his own interest, and character in this world, pretend to some religion <sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 312.

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## Applications to Ministers.

Never apply for what you see very little probability of obtaining ; for you will, by asking improper and unattainable things, accustom the Ministers to refuse you so often, that they will find it easy to refuse the properest, and most reasonable ones. It is a common, but a most mistaken rule at Court, to ask for every thing in order to get something : you do get something by it, it is true ; but that something, is, refusals and ridicule.

*Ib.* iv. 301.

## Armies.

Armies, though always the supporters and tools of absolute power for the time being, are always the destroyers of

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, being consulted about a young man who was 'a sort of disciple' of his own, but was thinking of taking orders in the English Church, wrote back :—'If the thing were worthy being treated gravely, I should tell him that the Pythian oracle, with the approbation of Xenophon, advised everyone to worship the gods—*νομῶ πόλεως*. I wish it were still in my power to be a hypocrite in this particular.'  
*Letters of Hume to W. Strahan*, p. 218.



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it too ; by frequently changing the hands in which they think proper to lodge it.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 38.*

### **Assurance.**

A steady assurance, with seeming modesty, is possibly the most useful qualification that a man can have in every part of life.

*Id. iii. 61.*

### **Attention.**

Without attention nothing is to be done : want of attention, which is really want of thought, is either folly or madness. You should not only have attention to every thing, but a quickness of attention, so as to observe, at once, all the people in the room ; their motions, their looks, and their words ; and yet without staring at them, and seeming to be an observer. This quick and unobserved observation is of infinite advantage in life, and is to be acquired with care ; and, on the contrary, what is called absence, which is a thoughtlessness, and want of attention about what is doing, makes a man so like either a fool or a madman, that, for my part, I see no real difference. A fool never has thought ; a madman has lost it ; and an absent man is, for the time, without it.

*Id. i. 181.*

. . .

There is no surer sign in the world of a little, weak mind, than inattention. Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well ; and nothing can be done well without attention. It is the sure answer of a fool, when you ask him about any thing that was said or done, where he was present, that,

‘truly

‘truly he did not mind it.’ And why did not the fool mind it? What had he else to do there, but to mind what was doing? A man of sense, sees, hears, and retains, every thing that passes where he is. I desire I may never hear you talk of not minding, nor complain, as most fools do, of a treacherous memory. Mind, not only what people say, but how they say it; and, if you have any sagacity, you may discover more truth by your eyes than by your ears. People can say what they will, but they cannot look just as they will; and their looks frequently discover, what their words are calculated to conceal.

*Letters to his Son, i. 228.*

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## Babbling Countenances.

People, unused to the world, have babbling countenances; and are unskilful enough to show, what they have sense enough not to tell. In the course of the world, a man must very often put on an easy, frank countenance, upon very disagreeable occasions; he must seem pleased, when he is very much otherwise; he must be able to accost and receive with smiles, those whom he would much rather meet with swords. In Courts he must not turn himself inside out. All this may, nay must be done, without falsehood and treachery: for it must go no farther than politeness and manners, and must stop short of assurances and professions of simulated friendship. Good manners, to those one does not love, are no more a breach of truth, than ‘your humble servant,’ at the bottom of a challenge is; they are universally agreed upon, and understood, to be things of course. They are necessary guards of the decency and peace of society: they must only act defensively; and  
then

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then not with arms poisoned with perfidy. Truth, but not the whole truth, must be the invariable principle of every man, who hath either religion, honour, or prudence.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 298.*

### Les bienséances.

There is a *bienséance* with regard to people of the lowest degree ; a gentleman observes it with his footman, even with the beggar in the street. He considers them as objects of compassion, not of insult ; he speaks to neither *d'un ton brusque*, but corrects the one coolly, and refuses the other with humanity. There is no one occasion in the world, in which *le ton brusque* is becoming a gentleman. In short, *les bienséances* are another word for *manners*, and extend to every part of life. They are propriety ; the Graces should attend in order to complete them : the Graces enable us to do, genteelly and pleasingly, what *les bienséances* require to be done at all. The latter are an obligation upon every man ; the former are an infinite advantage and ornament to any man. May you unite both !

*Id. iii. 207.*

### Birth.

The vulgar distinction between people of BIRTH and people of NO BIRTH will probably puzzle the critics and antiquaries of the thirtieth or fortieth centuries, when, in their judicious or laborious researches into the customs and manners of these present times, they shall have reason to suppose, that in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the island of Great Britain was inhabited by two sorts of people, some BORN, but the much greater number UNBORN. The fact will appear so *incredible*, that it will certainly

certainly be *believed*; the only difficulty will be how to account for it; and that, as it commonly does, will engross the attention of the learned.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 269.

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## Books.

Due attention to 'the inside of books, and due contempt for the outside, is the proper relation between a man of sense and his books.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 127.

. . .

Buy good books, and read them; the best books are the commonest, and the last editions are always the best, if the editors are not blockheads; for they may profit of the former. But take care not to understand editions and title-pages too well. It always smells of pedantry, and not always of learning.

*Ib.* ii. 354.

. . .

I read with more pleasure than ever; perhaps, because it is the only pleasure I have left. For, since I am struck out of living company by my deafness, I have recourse to the dead, whom alone I can hear; and I have assigned them their stated hours of audience. Solid *folios* are the people of business, with whom I converse in the morning. *Quartos* are the easier mixed company, with whom I sit after dinner; and I pass my evenings in the light, and often frivolous, *chit-chat* of small *octavos* and *duodecimos*.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 271.

. . .

If people bought no more books than they intended to read, and no more swords than they intended to use, the two

worst

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worst trades in Europe would be a bookseller's and a sword-cutler's ; but luckily for both they are reckoned genteel ornaments.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. Appendix, p. 77.

### Books and the World.

A man, who, without a good fund of knowledge and parts, adopts a Court life, makes the most ridiculous figure imaginable. He is a machine, little superior to the Court clock ; and, as this points out the hours, he points out the frivolous employment of them. He is, at most, a comment upon the clock ; and, according to the hours that it strikes, tells you, now it is levee, now dinner, now supper time, &c. The end which I propose by your education is, to unite in you all the knowledge of a Scholar, with the manners of a Courtier ; and to join, what is seldom joined in any of my countrymen, Books and the World. They are commonly twenty years old before they have spoken to any body above their Schoolmaster, and the Fellows of their college. If they happen to have learning, it is only Greek and Latin ; but not one word of Modern History, or Modern Languages. Thus prepared, they go abroad, as they call it ; but, in truth, they stay at home all that while ; for being very awkward, confoundedly ashamed, and not speaking the languages, they go into no foreign company, at least none good ; but dine and sup with one another only, at the tavern.

*Letters to his Son*, i. 351.

### The Boundaries of Right.

The sure characteristic of a sound and strong mind, is, to find, in every thing, those certain bounds, *quos ultra citrave nequit*

*nequit consistere rectum*<sup>1</sup>. These boundaries are marked out by a very fine line, which only good sense and attention can discover ; it is much too fine for vulgar eyes. In Manners, this line is Good-breeding ; beyond it, is troublesome ceremony ; short of it, is unbecoming negligence and inattention. In Morals, it divides ostentatious Puritanism, from criminal Relaxation. In Religion, Superstition from Impiety ; and, in short, every virtue from its kindred vice or weakness. I think you have sense enough to discover the line : keep it always in your eye, and learn to walk upon it ; rest upon Mr. Harte, he will poise you, till you are able to go alone. By the way, there are fewer people who walk well upon that line, than upon the slack rope ; and therefore, a good performer shines so much the more.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 130.

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## Bucks and Bloods.

There are now two sorts of young fellows about town, who call themselves *Bucks* and *Bloods*. They are very like one another, being equally the sons of riot, and ill manners. They are perpetually engaged in scrapes, assaults and batteries ; they frequent infamous houses, and often pass their nights in the Round-house<sup>2</sup>. The choicest figures of their rhetoric are oaths and curses, and their favourite curse is *Damn you*. All things whether animate or inanimate, that they dislike are *damned* things. Who gave these

<sup>1</sup> 'quos ultra citraque,' &c.—Horace Sat. i. 1. 107.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dr. Johnson told me that one night he was attacked in the street by four men to whom he would not yield, but kept them all at bay till the watch came up, and carried both him and them to the Round-house.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 299.

puppies

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puppies authority to damn anything but themselves, which they are indeed in a fair way of doing? So that their curses, thank God, are as absurd as they are wicked.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 289.*

### Bullying and Bubbling.

Few are mean enough to be bullied, though most are weak enough to be bubbled.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 296.*

### Business and Pleasure.

The man who cannot join business<sup>1</sup> and pleasure, is either a formal coxcomb in the one, or a sensual beast in the other.

*Id. ii. 157.*

. . .

Business requires no conjuration nor supernatural talents, as people unacquainted with it are apt to think. Method, diligence, and discretion, will carry a man, of good strong common sense, much higher than the finest parts, without them, can do. *Par negotiis, neque supra*<sup>2</sup>, is the true character of a man of business: but then it implies ready attention, and no *absences*; and a flexibility and versatility of attention from one object to another, without being engrossed by any one.

Be upon your guard against the pedantry and affectation of business, which young people are apt to fall into, from the pride of being concerned in it young. They look

<sup>1</sup> By 'business' Chesterfield generally means the business of a man in public life.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus.—Annals vi. 39.

thoughtful,

thoughtful, complain of the weight of business, throw out mysterious hints, and seem big with secrets which they do not know. Do you, on the contrary, never talk of business, but to those with whom you are to transact it; and learn to seem *vacuus*, and idle, when you have the most business.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 237.

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## Capitals.

Every thing is best at Capitals; the best masters, the best companies, and the best manners. Many other places are worth seeing, but Capitals only are worth residing at.

*Ib.* ii. 232.

## Ceremony.

It is respectful to bow to the King of England, it is disrespectful to bow to the King of France; it is the rule to curtsy to the Emperor; and the prostration of the whole body is required by Eastern Monarchs. These are established ceremonies, and must be complied with; but why they were established, I defy sense and reason to tell us. It is the same among all ranks, where certain customs are received, and must necessarily be complied with, though by no means the result of sense and reason. As for instance, the very absurd, though almost universal custom of drinking people's healths. Can there be any thing in the world less relative to any other man's health, than my drinking a glass of wine? Common sense, certainly, never pointed it out; but yet common sense tells me I must conform to it. Good sense, bids one be civil, and endeavour to please; though nothing but experience and observation can teach one the means, properly adapted to time, place, and persons. This knowledge



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knowledge is the true object of a gentleman's travelling, if he travels as he ought to do. By frequenting good company in every country, he himself becomes of every country ; he is no longer an Englishman, a Frenchman, or an Italian ; but he is an European : he adopts, respectively, the best manners of every country ; and is a Frenchman at Paris, an Italian at Rome, an Englishman at London.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 353.*

. . .

All ceremonies are in themselves very silly things ; but yet, a man of the world should know them. They are the outworks of Manners and Decency, which would be too often broken in upon, if it were not for that defence, which keeps the enemy at a proper distance. It is for that reason that I always treat fools and coxcombs with great ceremony ; true good-breeding not being a sufficient barrier against them.

*Ib. iv. 337.*

. . .

Civility is often attended by a ceremoniousness, which good-breeding corrects but will not quite abolish. A certain degree of ceremony is a necessary outwork of manners as well as of Religion. It keeps the forward and petulant at a proper distance, and is a very small restraint to the sensible and the well-bred part of the world.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 169.*

### Chapter of Accidents.

The chapter of knowledge is a very short, but the chapter of accidents is a very long one. I will keep dipping in it, for sometimes a concurrence of unknown and unfore-

seen

seen circumstances in the medicine and the disease may produce an unexpected and lucky hit.'

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 136.

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## Character.

There is nothing so delicate as your moral character, and nothing which it is your interest so much to preserve pure. Should you be suspected of Injustice, Malignity, Perfidy, Lying, &c., all the parts and knowledge in the world will never procure you esteem, friendship, or respect. A strange concurrence of circumstances has sometimes raised very bad men to high stations ; but they have been raised like criminals to a pillory, where their persons and their crimes, by being more conspicuous, are only the more known, the more detested, and the more pelted and insulted. If, in any case whatsoever, affectation and ostentation are pardonable, it is in the case of morality ; though, even there, I would not advise you to a pharisaical pomp of virtue. But I will recommend to you a most scrupulous tenderness for your moral character, and the utmost care not to say or do the least thing, that may, ever so slightly, taint it. Show yourself, upon all occasions, the advocate, the friend, but not the bully, of Virtue. Colonel Chartres<sup>1</sup>, whom you have certainly heard of, (who was, I believe, the most notorious blasted rascal in the world, and who had, by all sorts of crimes, amassed immense wealth) was so sensible of the disadvantage

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<sup>1</sup> ' Go dine with Chartres, in each vice out-do

K[innou]l's lew'd cargo, or Ty[rawle]y's crew.'

Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, 1 Epistles vi. 120.

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of a bad character, that I heard him once say, in his impudent, profligate manner, that, though he would not give one farthing for Virtue, he would give ten thousand pounds for a character; because he should get a hundred thousand pounds by it: whereas he was so blasted that he had no longer an opportunity of cheating people. Is it possible then that an honest man can neglect, what a wise rogue would purchase so dear?

*Letters to his Son, ii. 314.*

. . .

I have known people slattern away their character, without really polluting it; the consequence of which has been, that they have become innocently contemptible; their merit has been dimmed, their pretensions unregarded, and all their views defeated. Character must be kept bright, as well as clean.

*Id. ii. 318.*

. . .

The first impressions you give of yourself, at your first entrance upon the great stage of life in your own country, are of infinite consequence, and to a great degree decisive of your future character. You will be tried first by the grand jury of Middlesex, and if they find a Bill against you, you must not expect a very favourable verdict from the many petty juries who will try you again in Westminster.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 389.*

### Characters of Kings.

The characters of Kings and great men are only to be learnt in conversation, for they are never fairly written during their lives.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 32.*

Children

## Children and Subjects.

Children and subjects, though their obligations are certainly the lesser of the two, are much seldomer in the wrong than parents and Kings.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 247.

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## Civility.

Remember, there are but two *procédés* in the world for a gentleman and a man of parts: either extreme politeness, or knocking down. If a man, notoriously and designedly insults and affronts you, knock him down; but if he only injures you, your best revenge is to be extremely civil to him in your outward behaviour, though at the same time you counterwork him, and return him the compliment, perhaps with interest. This is not perfidy nor dissimulation; it would be so, if you were, at the same time, to make professions of esteem and friendship to this man; which I by no means recommend, but, on the contrary, abhor. All acts of civility are, by common consent, understood to be no more than a conformity to custom, for the quiet and conveniency of society, the *agrémens* of which are not to be disturbed by private dislikes and jealousies. Only women and little minds pout and spar for the entertainment of the company, that always laughs at, and never pities them. For my own part, though I would by no means give up any point to a competitor, yet I would pique myself upon showing him rather more civility than to another man.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 367.

## Clubs.

The object of all clubs is either drinking or gaming, but commonly both. A sitting member of a drinking club is

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not indeed always drunk, perhaps seldom quite so, but he is certainly never quite sober, and is *beclareted* next morning with the guzzle of the preceding evening. A member of a gaming club should be a cheat or he will soon be a beggar.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 392.*

### Company.

Talk often, but never long ; in that case, if you do not please, at least you are sure not to tire your hearers. Pay your own reckoning, but do not treat the whole company ; this being one of the very few cases in which people do not care to be treated, every one being fully convinced that he has wherewithal to pay.

Tell stories very seldom, and absolutely never but where they are very apt, and very short. Omit every circumstance that is not material, and beware of digressions. To have frequent recourse to narrative, betrays great want of imagination.

Never hold any body by the button, or the hand, in order to be heard out ; for, if people are not willing to hear you, you had much better hold your tongue than them.

Most long talkers single out some one unfortunate man in company (commonly him whom they observe to be the most silent, or their next neighbour) to whisper, or at least, in a half voice, to convey a continuity of words to. This is excessively ill-bred, and, in some degree, a fraud ; conversation-stock being a joint and common property. But, on the other hand, if one of these unmerciful talkers lays hold of you, hear him with patience, (and at least seeming attention)

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if he is worth obliging ; for nothing will oblige him more than a patient hearing, as nothing would hurt him more, than either to leave him in the midst of his discourse, or to discover your impatience under your affliction.

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Take rather than give, the tone of the company you are in. If you have parts, you will show them, more or less, upon every subject ; and if you have not, you had better talk sillily upon a subject of other people's than of your own choosing.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 85.*

. . .

A man of sense soon discovers, because he carefully observes, where, and how long, he is welcome ; and takes care to leave the company, at least as soon as he is wished out of it. Fools never perceive where they are either ill timed or ill placed.

*Id. ii. 185.*

. . .

The most general rule that I can give you for the world, and which your experience will convince you of the truth of, is, Never to give the tone to the company, but to take it from them ; and to labour more to put them in conceit with themselves, than to make them admire you. Those whom you can make like themselves better, will, I promise you, like you very well.

*Id. iii. 51.*

. . .

From the moment that you are dressed, and go out, pocket all your knowledge with your watch, and never pull it out in company unless desired : the producing of the one unasked, implies that you are weary of the company ; and  
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the producing of the other unrequired, will make the company weary of you. Company is a republic too jealous of its liberties, to suffer a dictator even for a quarter of an hour<sup>1</sup>; and yet in that, as in all republics, there are some few who really govern; but then it is by seeming to disclaim, instead of attempting to usurp the power.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 60.

. . .

I could wish you to converse only with those, who, either from their rank, their merit, or their beauty, require constant attention; for a young man can never improve in company, where he thinks he may neglect himself. A new bow must be constantly kept bent; when it grows older, and has taken the right turn, it may now and then be relaxed.

*Ib.* iii. 173.

. . .

No young man can possibly improve in any company, for which he has not respect enough to be under some degree of restraint.

*Ib.* iv. 37.

. . .

Choose the company of your superiors, whenever you can have it; that is the right and true pride. The mistaken and silly pride, to *primer* among inferiors<sup>2</sup>.

*Ib.* iv. 101.

<sup>1</sup> 'One evening, in a circle of wits, Goldsmith found fault with me for talking of Johnson as entitled to the honour of unquestionable superiority. "Sir," said he, "you are for making a monarchy of what should be a republic."'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 257.

<sup>2</sup> 'In this liberal London, pitch your sphere one step lower than yourself, and you can get what amount of flattery you will consent to.'—Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, ed. 1881, i. 230.

A man

A man may be too sober as well as too drunk to go into company, and his philosophical reflections may be as troublesome in one case as his extravagancy in the other.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 170.

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## Consciousness of Merit.

The consciousness of merit makes a man of sense more modest, though more firm. A man who displays his own merit is a coxcomb, and a man who does not know it is a fool. A man of sense knows it, exerts it, avails himself of it, but never boasts of it ; and always *seems* rather to under than over value it, though, in truth, he sets the right value upon it.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 121.

## Contempt.

There is nothing that people bear more impatiently, or forgive less, than contempt : and an injury is much sooner forgotten than an insult. If therefore you would rather please than offend, rather be well than ill spoken of, rather be loved than hated ; remember to have that constant attention about you, which flatters every man's little vanity ; and the want of which, by mortifying his pride, never fails to excite his resentment, or at least his ill-will. For instance ; most people (I might say all people) have their weaknesses ; they have their aversions and their likings, to such or such things ; so that, if you were to laugh at a man for his aversion to a cat, or cheese, (which are common antipathies) or, by inattention and negligence, to let them come in his way, where you could prevent it, he would, in the first case, think himself insulted, and, in the second, slighted ;  
and



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and would remember both. Whereas your care to procure for him what he likes, and to remove from him what he hates, shows him, that he is at least an object of your attention ; flatters his vanity, and makes him possibly more your friend, than a more important service would have done.

*Letters to his Son, i. 245.*

..

Every man is not ambitious, or covetous, or passionate ; but every man has pride enough in his composition to feel and resent the least slight and contempt. Remember, therefore, most carefully to conceal your contempt, however just, wherever you would not make an implacable enemy. Men are much more unwilling to have their weaknesses and their imperfections known, than their crimes ; and, if you hint to a man, that you think him silly, ignorant, or even ill-bred, or awkward, he will hate you more, and longer, than if you tell him, plainly, that you think him a rogue. Never yield to that temptation, which, to most young men, is very strong, of exposing other people's weaknesses and infirmities, for the sake either of diverting the company, or of showing your own superiority. You may get the laugh on your side by it, for the present ; but you will make enemies by it for ever ; and even those who laugh with you then, will, upon reflection, fear, and consequently hate you : besides that, it is ill-natured ; and a good heart desires rather to conceal, than expose other people's weaknesses or misfortunes. If you have wit, use it to please, and not to hurt : you may shine, like the sun in the temperate Zones, without scorching. Here it is wished for ; under the Line it is dreaded.

*ib. ii. 58.*

Some

Some men are more captious than others; some are always wrong-headed: but every man living has such a share of Vanity, as to be hurt by marks of slight and contempt. Every man does not pretend to be a Poet, a Mathematician, or a Statesman, and considered as such; but every man pretends to common sense, and to fill his place in the world with common decency; and, consequently, does not easily forgive those negligences, inattentions, and slights, which seem to call in question, or utterly deny him both these pretensions.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 301.*

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It is very often more necessary to conceal contempt than resentment, the former being never forgiven, but the latter sometimes forgot.

*Id. liii. 56.*

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Avoid Contempt as you would Death, or rather more; hatred cannot be always avoided, for private pique, envy, jealousy, and various passions excite it; but a certain dignity of character and manners, will effectually and eternally secure you against ridicule and contempt.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 307.*

### Conversation.

Were you to converse with a King, you ought to be as easy and unembarrassed as with your own *valet de chambre*: but yet every look, word, and action, should imply

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imply the utmost respect<sup>1</sup>. What would be proper and well-bred with others, much your superiors, would be absurd and ill-bred with one so very much so. You must wait till you are spoken to : you must receive, not give, the subject of conversation ; and you must even take care that the given subject of such conversation do not lead you into any impropriety. The art would be to carry it, if possible, to some indirect flattery : such as commending those virtues in some other person, in which that Prince either thinks he does, or at least would be thought by others to excel. Almost the same precautions are necessary to be used with Ministers, Generals, &c. who expect to be treated with very near the same respect as their masters, and commonly deserve it better. There is however this difference, that one may begin the conversation with them, if on their side it should happen to drop, provided one does not carry it to any subject, upon which it is improper either for them to speak or be spoken to. In these two cases, certain attitudes and actions would be extremely absurd, because too easy, and consequently disrespectful. As for instance, if you were to put your arms across in your bosom, twirl your snuff-box, trample with your feet, scratch your head, &c. it would be shockingly ill-bred in that company ; and, indeed, not extremely well-bred in any other. The great difficulty in those cases, though a very surmountable one by

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<sup>1</sup> ' During the whole of his interview with the King, Dr. Johnson talked to His Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee and in the drawing-room.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 40.

attention

attention and custom, is to join perfect inward ease with perfect outward respect.

In mixed companies with your equals (for in mixed companies all people are to a certain degree equal) greater ease and liberty are allowed; but they too have their bounds within *bienséance*. There is a social respect necessary: you may start your own subject of conversation with modesty, taking great care, however, *de ne jamais parler de cordes dans la maison d'un pendu*. Your words, gestures, and attitudes, have a greater degree of latitude, though by no means an unbounded one. You may have your hands in your pockets, take snuff, sit, stand, or occasionally walk, as you like: but I believe you would not think it very *bienséant* to whistle, put on your hat, loosen your garters or your buckles, lie down upon a couch, or go to bed and welter in an easy chair. These are negligences and freedoms which one can only take when quite alone: they are injurious to superiors, shocking and offensive to equals, brutal and insulting to inferiors.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 203.*

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. . .

In conversing with those who are much your superiors, however easy and familiar you may and ought to be with them, preserve the respect that is due to them. Converse with your equals, with an easy familiarity and at the same time with great civility and decency. But too much familiarity, according to the old saying, often breeds contempt, and sometimes quarrels; and I know nothing more difficult in common behaviour than to fix due bounds to familiarity; too little implies an unsociable formality, too much destroys

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all friendly and social intercourse. The best rule I can give you to manage familiarity is never to be more familiar with anybody than you would be willing and even glad that he should be with you ; on the other hand, avoid that uncomfortable reserve and coldness which is generally the shield of cunning, or the protection of dulness. The Italian maxim is a wise one, *Volto schiolto e pensieri stretti*<sup>1</sup> ; that is, let your countenance be open and your thoughts be close. To your inferiors you should use a hearty benevolence in your words and actions instead of a refined politeness, which would be apt to make them suspect that you rather laughed at them. For example, you must show civility to a mere Country Gentleman in a very different manner from what you do to a Man of the world. Your reception of him should seem hearty, and rather coarse, to relieve him from the embarrassment of his own *mauvaise honte*. Have attention even in company of fools, for though they are fools, they may perhaps drop, or repeat something worth your knowing, and which you may profit by.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 192.*

### Courtiers.

The trade of a Courtier is as much a trade, as that of a shoemaker ; and he who applies himself the most, will work the best : the only difficulty is to distinguish between the right and proper qualifications and their kindred faults ; for there is but a line between every perfection and its

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<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield quotes this maxim eight times in the *Letters to his Son* and twice at least in the *Letters to his Godson*.

neighbouring

neighbouring imperfection. As for example, you must be extremely well-bred and polite, but without the troublesome forms and stiffness of ceremony. You must be respectful and assenting, but without being servile and abject. You must be frank, but without indiscretion, and close, without being costive. You must keep up dignity of character, without the least pride of birth, or rank. You must be gay, within all the bounds of decency and respect; and grave, without the affectation of wisdom, which does not become the age of twenty. You must be essentially secret, without being dark and mysterious. You must be firm, and even bold, but with great seeming modesty.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 327.*

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### Courts.

A mere Courtier, without parts or knowledge, is the most frivolous and contemptible of all Beings; as, on the other hand, a man of parts and knowledge, who acquires the easy and noble manners of a Court, is the most perfect. It is a trite, common-place observation, that Courts are the seats of falsehood and dissimulation. That, like many, I might say most, common-place observations, is false. Falsehood and dissimulation are certainly to be found at Courts; but where are they not to be found? Cottages have them, as well as Courts; only with worse manners. A couple of neighbouring farmers, in a village, will contrive and practise as many tricks, to over-reach each other at the next market, or to supplant each other in the favour of the 'Squire, as any two Courtiers can do to supplant each other in the  
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favour of their Prince<sup>1</sup>. Whatever Poets may write, or fools believe, of rural innocence and truth, and of the perfidy of Courts, this is most undoubtedly true—that Shepherds and Ministers are both men ; their nature and passions the same, the modes of them only different<sup>2</sup>.

*Letters to his Son, i. 347.*

..

Courts are, unquestionably, the seats of Politeness and Good-breeding ; were they not so, they would be the seats of slaughter and desolation. Those who now smile upon, and embrace, would affront and stab each other, if Manners did not interpose : but Ambition and Avarice, the two prevailing passions at Courts, found Dissimulation more effectual than Violence ; and Dissimulation introduced that habit of Politeness, which distinguishes the Courtier from the Country Gentleman. In the former case, the strongest body would prevail ; in the latter, the strongest mind.

A man of parts and efficiency need not flatter every body at Court ; but he must take great care to offend no body personally ; it being in the power of very many to hurt him, who cannot serve him. Homer supposes a chain let down from Jupiter to the earth, to connect him with Mortals.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Farmers, I think,' said Johnson, 'are often worthless fellows. Few lords will cheat ; and if they do, they'll be ashamed of it ; farmers cheat and are not ashamed of it ; they have all the sensual vices, too, of the nobility, with cheating into the bargain.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, iii. 353.

<sup>2</sup> 'Mr Crabbe's sentiments as to the false notions of rustic happiness and rustic virtue were quite congenial with his (Johnson's) own.'—*Ib.* iv. 175.

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There is, at all Courts, a chain, which connects the Prince, or the Minister, with the Page of the back-stairs, or the Chambermaid. The King's Wife, or Mistress, has an influence over him ; a Lover has an influence over her ; the Chambermaid, or the Valet de Chambre, has an influence over both ; and so *ad infinitum*. You must, therefore, not break a link of that chain, by which you hope to climb up to the Prince.

You must renounce Courts, if you will not connive at Knaves, and tolerate Fools. Their number makes them considerable. You should as little quarrel, as connect yourself with either.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 199.*

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Though Monarchies may differ a good deal, Kings differ very little. Those who are absolute desire to continue so, and those who are not, endeavour to become so ; hence, the same maxims and manners almost in all Courts ; voluptuousness and profusion encouraged, the one to sink the people into indolence, the other into poverty, consequently into dependency. The Court is called the world here, as well as at Paris ; and nothing more is meant, by saying that a man knows the world, than that he knows Courts. In all Courts you must expect to meet with connections without friendship, enmities without hatred, honour without virtue, appearances saved, and realities sacrificed ; good manners, with bad morals ; and all vice and virtue so disguised, that whoever has only reasoned upon both, would know neither, when he first met them at Court. It is well that you should know the map of that Country, that when you come to travel in it you may do it with greater safety.

*Ib. iii. 40.*

Mere

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Mere plain truth, sense, and knowledge, will by no means do alone in Courts ; art and ornaments must come to their assistance. Humours must be flattered ; the *molliæ tempora* must be studied and known : confidence, acquired by seeming frankness, and profited of by silent skill. And, above all, you must gain and engage the heart, to betray the understanding to you. *Hæ tibi erunt artes.*

*Letters to his Son, iii. 153.*

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The greatest favours may be done so awkwardly and bunglingly as to offend ; and disagreeable things may be done so agreeably as almost to oblige. Endeavour to acquire this great secret ; it exists, it is to be found, and is worth a great deal more than the grand secret of the Alchemists would be if it were, as it is not, to be found. This is only to be learned in Courts, where clashing views, jarring opinions, and cordial hatreds, are softened, and kept within decent bounds, by politeness and manners. Frequent, observe, and learn Courts. Are you free of that of St. Cloud ? Are you often at Versailles ? Insinuate and wriggle yourself into favour at those places.

*ib. iii. 155.*

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Courts are the best keys to characters : there every passion is busy, every art exerted, every character analysed : jealousy, ever watchful, not only discovers, but exposes, the mysteries of the trade, so that even by-standers *y apprennent à deviner*. There too the great art of pleasing is practised, taught, and learned, with all its graces and delicacies. It is the first thing needful there : it is the absolutely necessary harbinger  
of

of merit and talents, let them be ever so great. There is no advancing a step without it. Let misanthropes and would-be philosophers declaim as much as they please against the vices, the simulation, and dissimulation of Courts; those invectives are always the result of ignorance, ill-humour, or envy. Let them show me a cottage, where there are not the same vices of which they accuse Courts; with this difference only, that in a cottage they appear in their native deformity, and that in Courts, manners and good-breeding make them less shocking, and blunt their edge. No, be convinced that the good-breeding, the *tournure*, *la douceur dans les manières*, which alone are to be acquired at Courts, are not the showish trifles only which some people call or think them: they are a solid good; they prevent a great deal of real mischief; they create, adorn, and strengthen friendships: they keep hatred within bounds; they promote good-humour and good-will in families, where the want of good-breeding and gentleness of manners is commonly the original cause of discord.

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*Letters to his Son*, iii. 196.

. . .

In Courts, an universal gentleness and *douceur dans les manières* is most absolutely necessary: an offended fool, or a slighted *valet de chambre*, may, very possibly, do you more hurt at Court, than ten men of merit can do you good. Fools, and low people, are always jealous of their dignity; and never forget nor forgive what they reckon a slight. On the other hand, they take civility, and a little attention, as a favour; remember, and acknowledge it: this, in my mind, is buying them cheap; and therefore, they are worth buying.

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The Prince himself, who is rarely the shining genius of his Court, esteems you only by hearsay, but likes you by his senses; that is, from your air, your politeness, and your manner of addressing him; of which alone he is a judge. There is a Court garment, as well as a wedding garment, without which you will not be received. That garment is the *volto sciolto*<sup>1</sup>; an imposing air, an elegant politeness, easy and engaging manners, universal attention, an insinuating gentleness, and all those *je ne sais quoi* that compose the *Graces*.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 266.

. . .

At Courts there will be always coldnesses, dislikes, jealousies, and hatred; the harvest being but small, in proportion to the number of labourers; but then, as they arise often, they die soon, unless they are perpetuated by the manner in which they have been carried on, more than by the matter which occasioned them. The turns and vicissitudes of Courts frequently make friends of enemies, and enemies of friends; you must labour therefore, to acquire that great and uncommon talent, of hating with good-breeding, and loving with prudence; to make no quarrel irreconcilable, by silly and unnecessary indications of anger; and no friendship dangerous, in case it breaks, by a wanton, indiscreet, and unreserved confidence.

*Ib.* iii. 368.

. . .

I hope you frequent all the Courts; a man should make his face familiar there. Long habit produces favour in-

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<sup>1</sup> See *post*, under *Volto sciolto*.

sensibly

sensibly : and acquaintance often does more than friendship, in that climate, where *les beaux sentimens* are not the natural growth.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 86.*

. . .

Flattery, though a base coin, is the necessary pocket-money at Court ; where, by custom and consent, it has obtained such a currency, that it is no longer a fraudulent, but a legal payment.

At Court, many more people can hurt, than can help you ; please the former, but engage the latter.

*Ib. iv. 303.*

. . .

You will and ought to be in some employment at Court. It is the best school for manners, and whatever ignorant people may think or say of it, no more the seat of vice than a village is ; human nature is the same everywhere, the modes only are different. In the village they are coarse ; in the Court they are polite ; like the different clothes in the two several places, frieze in the one and velvet in the other.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 392.*

## Dancing.

Do you mind your dancing, while your dancing-master is with you ? As you will be often under the necessity of dancing a minuet, I would have you dance it very well. Remember, that the graceful motion of the arms, the giving your hand, and the putting-on and pulling off your hat genteelly, are the material parts of a gentleman's dancing. But the greatest advantage, of dancing well, is, that it necessarily teaches you to present yourself, to sit,

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stand, and walk genteelly; all of which are of real importance to a man of fashion.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 76.

. . .

Your daughter's dancing is not material: for no man in his senses desires a dancing wife.

Letter to A. C. Stanhope. *Letters to his Godson*, p. 355.

### Debating.

Seek for, and answer in your own mind, all the arguments that can be urged on either side, and write them down in an elegant style. This will prepare you for debating, and give you an habitual eloquence; for I would not give a farthing for a mere holiday eloquence, displayed once or twice in a session, in a set declamation; but I want an every-day, ready, and habitual eloquence, to adorn *extempore*, and debating speeches; to make business not only clear but agreeable, and to please even those whom you cannot inform, and who do not desire to be informed. All this you may acquire, and make habitual to you, with as little trouble as it cost you to dance a minuet as well as you do. You now dance it mechanically, and well, without thinking of it.

*Letters to his Son*, iv. 75.

### Defamation.

Defamation and calumny never attack where there is no weak place; they magnify, but they do not create.

*Id.* ii. 317.

### Despised and hated.

The King of France is despised, and I do not wonder at it;

it ; but he has brought it about, to be hated at the same time, which seldom happens to the same man<sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 38.*

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## Differences of opinion.

A difference of opinion, though in the merest trifles, alienates little minds, especially of high rank. It is full as easy to commend as to blame a great man's cook, or his tailor : it is shorter too ; and the objects are no more worth disputing about, than the people are worth disputing with.

*Ib. iv. 302.*

## Dignifying vices.

I have known some people dignify even their vices, first, by never boasting of them, and next by not practising them in an illiberal and indecent manner.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 184.*

## Disagreeable things.

Avoid disagreeable things, as much as, by dexterity, you can ; but when they are unavoidable, do them with seeming willingness and alacrity.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 203.*

## Disputes.

Disputes upon any subject are a sort of trial of the understanding, and must end in the mortification of one or other of the disputants.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 173.*

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<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield expresses this thought more neatly in one of his letters to Dayrolles. 'The King is both hated and despised, which seldom happens to the same man.' *Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 120.

**Doing**

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### Doing Nothing.

Many people think that they are in pleasures, provided they are neither in study nor in business. Nothing like it; they are doing nothing, and might just as well be asleep. They contract habitudes from laziness, and they only frequent those places where they are free from all restraints and attentions. Be upon your guard against this idle profusion of time; and let every place you go to be either the scene of quick and lively pleasures, or the school of your improvements: let every company you go into, either gratify your senses, extend your knowledge, or refine your manners.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 279.*

### Dress.

There is no one thing so trifling, but which (if it is to be done at all) ought to be done well. And I have often told you, that I wished you even played at pitch, and cricket, better than any boy at Westminster. For instance; dress is a very foolish thing; and yet it is a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed, according to his rank and way of life; and it is so far from being a disparagement to any man's understanding, that it is rather a proof of it, to be as well dressed as those whom he lives with: the difference in this case, between a man of sense and a fop, is, that the fop values himself upon his dress; and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time that he knows he must not neglect it: there are a thousand foolish customs of this kind, which, not being criminal, must be complied with, and even cheerfully, by men of sense. Diogenes the Cynic was a wise man for despising

despising them ; but a fool for showing it. Be wiser than other people, if you can ; but do not tell them so.

*Letters to his Son, i. 223.*

. . .

Your dress (as insignificant a thing as dress is in itself) is now become an object worthy of some attention ; for, I confess, I cannot help forming some opinion of a man's sense and character from his dress ; and, I believe, most people do as well as myself. Any affectation whatsoever in dress, implies, in my mind, a flaw in the understanding. Most of our young fellows, here, display some character or other by their dress ; some affect the tremendous, and wear a great and fiercely cocked hat, an enormous sword, a short waistcoat, and a black cravat : these I should be almost tempted to swear the peace against, in my own defence, if I were not convinced that they are but meek asses in lions' skins. Others go in brown frocks, leather breeches, great oaken cudgels in their hands, their hats uncocked, and their hair unpowdered ; and imitate grooms, stage-coachmen, and country bumpkins, so well, in their outsides, that I do not make the least doubt of their resembling them equally in their insides. A man of sense carefully avoids any particular character in his dress ; he is accurately clean for his own sake ; but all the rest is for other people's. He dresses as well, and in the same manner, as the people of sense and fashion of the place where he is. If he dresses better, as he thinks, that is, more than they, he is a fop ; if he dresses worse, he is unpardonably negligent : but, of the two, I would rather have a young fellow too much than too little dressed : the excess on that side will wear off, with a little age and reflection ;

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reflection ; but, if he is negligent at twenty, he will be a sloven at forty, and stink at fifty years old. Dress yourself fine, where others are fine ; and plain, where others are plain ; but take care, always, that your clothes are well made, and fit you, for otherwise they will give you a very awkward air. When you are once well dressed, for the day, think no more of it afterwards ; and, without any stiffness for fear of discomposing that dress, let all your motions be as easy and natural as if you had no clothes on at all. So much for dress, which I maintain to be a thing of consequence in the polite world.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 123.*

. . .

You are now of an age, at which the adorning your person is not only not ridiculous, but proper and becoming. Negligence would imply, either an indifference about pleasing, or else an insolent security of pleasing, without using those means to which others are obliged to have recourse.

*Id. ii. 182.*

. . .

Next to clothes being fine, they should be well made, and worn easily ; for a man is only the less genteel for a fine coat, if in wearing it he shows a regard for it, and is not as easy in it as if it were a plain one.

*Id. iii. 22.*

. . .

You will possibly be surprised when I assert, (but, upon my word, it is literally true) that to be very well dressed is of much more importance to you, than all the Greek you know will be of, these thirty years. Remember, the world,

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is now your only business ; and you must adopt its customs and manners, be they silly or be they not. To neglect your dress, is an affront to all the women you keep company with ; as it implies, that you do not think them worth that attention which every body else doth ; they mind dress, and you will never please them if you neglect yours ; and if you do not please the women, you will not please half the men you otherwise might. It is the women who put a young fellow in fashion, even with the men. A young fellow ought to have a certain fund of coquetry ; which should make him try all the means of pleasing, as much as any coquette in Europe can do. Old as I am, and little thinking of women, God knows, I am very far from being negligent of my dress ; and why ? From conformity to custom ; and out of decency to men, who expect that degree of complaisance. I do not, indeed, wear feathers and red heels<sup>1</sup> ; which would ill suit my age ; but I take care to have my clothes well made, my wig well combed and powdered, my linen and person extremely clean. I even allow my footmen forty shillings a year extraordinary, that they may be spruce and neat.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 226.*

. . .

Never be the first nor the last in the fashion. Wear as fine clothes as those of your rank commonly do, and rather better than worse, and when you are well dressed once a day, do not seem to know that you have any clothes on at all, but let your carriage and motions be as easy as they could

<sup>1</sup> When Boswell in his boyhood was told that his father had been once seen 'strutting abroad in red-heeled shoes and red stockings, he was so much diverted that he could hardly sit on his chair for laughing.' *Scotland and Scotsmen of the Eighteenth Century*, i. 161.

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be in your nightgown. A fop values himself upon his dress, but a man of sense will not neglect it, in his youth at least. The greatest fop I ever saw, was at the same time the greatest sloven, for it is an affected singularity in dress, be it of which side it will, that constitutes a fop, and everybody will prefer an overdressed fop to a slovenly one.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 171.*

### Drinking.

Archbishop Tillotson asserts, and very truly, that no man can plead, in defence of swearing, that he was born of a swearing constitution. I believe the same thing may with equal truth be affirmed of drinking. No man is born a drinker. Drinking is an acquired, not a natural, vice. The child, when he first tastes strong liquors, rejects them with evident signs of disgust, but is insensibly brought first to bear, and then perhaps to like, them, by the folly of his parents, who promise them as an encouragement, and give them as a reward.

When the coroner's inquest examines the body of one of those unhappy wretches, who drown themselves in a pond or river, with commonly a provision of lead in their pockets to make the work the surer, the verdict is either *felo de se*, or lunatic. Is it then the water, or the suddenness of the plunge, that constitutes either the madness or the guilt of the act? Is there any difference between a water and a wine suicide? If there be, it is evidently in favour of the former, which is never so deliberate and premeditated as the latter. The soaker jogs on with a gentler pace indeed, but to as sure and certain destruction; and, as a

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proof of his intention, would, I believe, upon examination, be generally found to have a good deal of lead about him too.

*Miscellaneous Works, ii. 221.*

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Drinking is a most beastly vice in every country, but it is really a ruinous one to Ireland: nine gentlemen in ten in Ireland are impoverished by the great quantity of claret, which, from mistaken notions of hospitality and dignity, they think it necessary should be drunk in their houses; this expense leaves them no room to improve their estates, by proper indulgence upon proper conditions to their tenants, who must pay them to the full, and upon the very day, that they may pay their wine-merchants.

There was a law in one of the ancient governments, I have forgot which, that empowered a man to kill his wife if she smelt of wine. I most sincerely wish that there were a law in Ireland, and better executed than most laws are, to empower the wives to kill their husbands in the like case; it would promote sobriety extremely, if the effects of conjugal affection were fully considered.

*Ib. iv. 231.*

..

If it would but please God, by his lightning, to blast all the vines in the world, and by his thunder to turn all the wines now in Ireland sour, as I most sincerely wish he would, Ireland would enjoy a degree of quiet and plenty that it has never yet known. By the way, I am not so partial neither to Ireland, as not to pray for the same blessing for this my native country; notwithstanding the grief and desolation which I know it would occasion in our two  
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learned universities, the body of our clergy, and among our knights of shires, burgesses, &c., and in general among all those worthy honest gentlemen, who toast and are toasted.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 359.*

### Economy.

A fool squanders away, without credit or advantage to himself, more than a man of sense spends with both. The latter employs his money as he does his time, and never spends a shilling of the one, nor a minute of the other, but in something that is either useful or rationally pleasing to himself or others. The former buys whatever he does not want, and does not pay for what he does want. He cannot withstand the charms of a toy-shop; snuff-boxes, watches, heads of canes, &c. are his destruction. His servants and tradesmen conspire with his own indolence, to cheat him; and, in a very little time, he is astonished, in the midst of all the ridiculous superfluities, to find himself in want of all the real comforts and necessities of life. Without care and method, the largest fortune will not, and with them, almost the smallest will, supply all necessary expenses. As far as you can possibly, pay ready money for every thing you buy, and avoid bills. Pay that money too, yourself, and not through the hands of any servant, who always either stipulates poundage, or requires a present for his good word, as they call it. Where you must have bills (as for meat and drink, clothes, &c.) pay them regularly every month, and with your own hand. Never, from a mistaken economy, buy a thing you do not want, because it is cheap; or, from a silly pride, because it is dear. Keep an account, in a book,  
of

of all that you receive, and of all that you pay ; for no man, who knows what he receives, and what he pays, ever runs out. I do not mean that you should keep an account of the shillings and half-crowns which you may spend in chair-hire, operas, &c. ; they are unworthy of the time, and of the ink, that they would consume ; leave such *minuties* to dull, penny-wise fellows ; but remember, in economy, as well as in every other part of life, to have the proper attention to proper objects, and the proper contempt for little ones.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 128.

. . .

It is very difficult to fix the particular point of economy ; the best error of the two is on the parsimonious side. That may be corrected, the other cannot.

*Ib.* iv. 306.

### Education.

I am very sure that children are capable of a certain degree of education long before they are commonly thought to be so. At a year and a half old, I am persuaded that a child might be made to comprehend the injustice of torturing flies and strangling birds ; whereas, they are commonly encouraged in both, and their hearts hardened by habit.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 124.

. . .

Pray let my god-son never know what a blow or a whipping is, unless for those things for which, were he a man, he would deserve them ; such as lying, cheating, making mischief, and meditated malice. In any of those cases, however young, let him be most severely whipped. But

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either to threaten or whip him, for falling down, or not standing still to have his head combed and his face washed, is a most unjust and absurd severity ; and yet all these are the common causes of whipping. This hardens them to punishment, and confounds them as to the causes of it ; for, if a poor child is to be whipped equally for telling a lie, or for a dirty nose, he must of course think them equally criminal. Reason him, by fair means, out of all those things, for which he will not be the worse man ; and flog him severely for those things only, for which the law would punish him as a man.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 130.*

### Elegancy of Language.

Constant experience has shown me, that great purity and elegance of style, with a graceful elocution, cover a multitude of faults, in either a speaker or a writer. For my own part, I confess (and I believe most people are of my mind) that if a speaker should ungracefully mutter or stammer out to me the sense of an angel, deformed by barbarisms and solecisms, or larded with vulgarisms, he should never speak to me a second time, if I could help it. Gain the heart, or you gain nothing ; the eyes and the ears are the only roads to the heart. Merit and knowledge will not gain hearts, though they will secure them when gained. Pray have that truth ever in your mind. Engage the eyes, by your address, air, and motions ; soothe the ears, by the elegancy and harmony of your diction : the heart will certainly follow ; and the whole man, or woman, will as certainly follow the heart.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 269.*

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The nature of our constitution makes eloquence more useful, and more necessary, in this country, than in any other in Europe. A certain degree of good sense and knowledge is requisite for that, as well as for every thing else ; but beyond that, the purity of diction, the elegance of style, the harmony of periods, a pleasing elocution, and a graceful action, are the things which a public speaker should attend to the most ; because his audience certainly does, and understands them the best : or rather indeed understands little else.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 279.*

. .

A man who is not born with a poetical genius can never be a poet, or, at best, an extreme bad one : but every man, who can speak at all, can speak elegantly and correctly, if he pleases, by attending to the best authors and orators ; and, indeed, I would advise those who do not speak elegantly not to speak at all, for I am sure they will get more by their silence than by their speech.

*Id. ii. 308.*

. .

I would wish you to be so attentive to this object, that I would not have you to speak to your footman, but in the very best words that the subject admits of, be the language which it will. Think of your words, and of their arrangement, before you speak ; choose the most elegant, and place them in the best order. Consult your own ear to avoid cacophony ; and what is very near as bad, monotony. Think also of your gesture and looks, when you are speaking even upon the most trifling subjects. The same things, differently expressed, looked, and delivered, cease to be the same things

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things. The most passionate lover in the world cannot make a stronger declaration of love, than the *Bourgeois gentilhomme* does in this happy form of words: *Mourir d'amour me font belle Marquise vos beaux yeux*<sup>1</sup>. I defy any body to say more; and yet I would advise no body to say that; and I would recommend to you, rather to smother and conceal your passion entirely, than to reveal it in these words. Seriously, this holds in every thing, as well as in that ludicrous instance. The French, to do them justice, attend very minutely to the purity, the correctness, and the elegancy of their style, in conversation, and in their letters. *Bien narrer* is an object of their study; and though they sometimes carry it to affectation, they never sink into inelegancy, which is much the worst extreme of the two. Observe them, and form your French style upon theirs; for elegancy in one language will re-produce itself in all. I knew a young man, who, being just elected a member of Parliament, was laughed at for being discovered, through the key-hole of his chamber door, speaking to himself in the glass, and forming his looks and gestures. I could not join in that laugh; but, on the contrary, thought him much wiser than those who laughed at him; for he knew the importance of those little graces in a public assembly, and they did not.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 126.

### Englishmen abroad.

The well-bred man feels himself firm and easy in all companies; is modest without being bashful, and steady

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<sup>1</sup> M. Jourdain is taught five ways in which this sentiment can be expressed, but this is not one of them. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Act. ii. sc. 6.

without

without being impudent : if he is a stranger, he observes, with care, the manners and ways of the people the most esteemed at that place, and conforms to them with complaisance. Instead of finding fault with the customs of that place, and telling the people that the English ones are a thousand times better (as my countrymen are very apt to do), he commends their table, their dress, their houses, and their manners, a little more, it may be, than he really thinks they deserve. But this degree of complaisance is neither criminal nor abject ; and it is but a small price to pay for the good-will and affection of the people you converse with. As the generality of people are weak enough to be pleased with these little things, those who refuse to please them, so cheaply, are, in my mind, weaker than they.

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*Letters to his Son, i. 234.*

### Ennui.

Whatever your amusements, or pleasures, may be at Hamburg, I dare say you taste them more sensibly than ever you did in your life, now that you have business enough to whet your appetite to them. Business, one half of the day, is the best preparation for the pleasures of the other half. I hope, and believe, that it will be with you as it was with an apothecary whom I knew at Twickenham. A considerable estate fell to him by an unexpected accident ; upon which he thought it decent to leave off his business ; accordingly, he generously gave up his shop and his stock to his head man, set up his coach, and resolved to live like a gentleman ; but, in less than a month, the man, used to business, found that living like a gentleman was dying of *ennui* ; upon which he bought his shop and stock, resumed

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his trade ; and lived very happily, after he had something to do <sup>1</sup>.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 139.

### Enthusiasm.

Consciousness of guilt, a fiery temper, and a wild imagination, are the common ingredients of enthusiasm.

*Id.* iii. 249.

### Errors in opinion.

Errors and mistakes, however gross, in matters of opinion, if they are sincere, are to be pitied ; but not punished, nor laughed at. The blindness of the understanding is as much to be pitied, as the blindness of the eyes ; and there is neither jest nor guilt in a man's losing his way in either case. Charity bids us set him right, if we can, by arguments and persuasions ; but charity, at the same time, forbids, either to punish or ridicule his misfortune. Every man's reason is, and must be, his guide ; and I may as well expect, that every man should be of my size and complexion, as that he should reason just as I do. Every man seeks for truth ; but God only knows who has found it.

*Id.* i. 272.

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<sup>1</sup> 'An eminent tallowchandler in London,' said Johnson, 'who had acquired a considerable fortune, gave up the trade in favour of his foreman, and went to live at a country-house near town. He soon grew weary, and paid frequent visits to his old shop, where he desired they might let him know their *melting-days*, and he would come and assist them ; which he accordingly did.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 337.

It is not to be conceived how many people, capable of reasoning, if they would, live and die in a thousand errors, from laziness ; they will rather adopt the prejudices of others, than give themselves the trouble of forming opinions of their own. They say things, at first, because other people have said them, and then they persist in them, because they have said them themselves.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 62.*

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## Everybody good for something.

There is hardly any body good for every thing, and there is scarcely any body who is absolutely good for nothing. A good chemist will extract some spirit or other out of every substance ; and a man of parts will, by his dexterity and management, elicit something, worth knowing, out of every being he converses with.

*Id. i. 305.*

## Every-day senses.

I shall go to town in four or five days, and carry back with me a little more hearing than I brought : but yet, not half enough for common use. One wants ready pocket money much oftener than one wants great sums ; and, to use a very odd expression, I want to hear at sight. I love every-day senses, every-day wit and entertainment ; a man who is only good on holidays, is good for very little.

*Id. iv. 4.*

## Expletives.

Upon these delicate occasions you must practise the ministerial shrugs and *persiflage* ; for silent gesticulations, which you would be most inclined to, would not be sufficient : something must be said ; but that something, when analysed,

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must amount to nothing. As for instance, *Il est vrai qu'on s'y perd, mais que voulez-vous que je vous dise, — il y a bien du pour et du contre, un petit Résident ne voit guères le fond du sac. — Il faut attendre.*—Those sort of expletives are of infinite use ; and nine people in ten think they mean something<sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 103.*

### Failings and weaknesses.

People in general will much better bear being told of their vices or crimes, than of their little failings and weaknesses. They, in some degree, justify or excuse (as they think) the former, by strong passions, seduction, and artifices of others ; but to be told of, or to confess their little failings and weaknesses, implies an inferiority of parts, too mortifying to that self-love and vanity, which are inseparable from our natures. I have been intimate enough with several people, to tell them, that they had said or done a very criminal thing ; but I never was intimate enough with any man, to tell him, very seriously, that he had said or done a very foolish one.

*Ib. ii. 272.*

### Fashion.

Fashion, which is always at first the offspring of little minds, and the child of levity, gains strength and support by the great number of its relations, till at length it is received and adopted by better understandings, who either

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Stanhope was at this time (October, 1757) Resident at Hamburg. The Duke of Cumberland had given up his commission of Captain-General and his regiment of Guards.

conform

conform to it to avoid singularity, or who are surprised into it, from want of attention to an object which they look upon as indifferent in itself, and so dignify and establish the folly.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 139.

## Fathers and Sons.

As fathers commonly go, it is seldom a misfortune to be fatherless; and, considering the general run of sons, as seldom a misfortune to be childless.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 231.

. . .

Few fathers care much for their sons, or, at least, most of them care more for their money; and, consequently, content themselves with giving them, at the cheapest rate, the common run of education; that is, a school till eighteen; the university till twenty; and a couple of years riding post through the several towns of Europe; impatient till their boobies come home to be married, and, as they call it, settled. Of those who really love their sons, few know how to do it. Some spoil them by fondling them, while they are young, and then quarrel with them when they are grown up, for having been spoiled; some love them like mothers, and attend only to the bodily health and strength of the hopes of their family, solemnize his birthday, and rejoice, like the subjects of the Great Mogul, at the increase of his bulk<sup>1</sup>: while others, minding, as they

<sup>1</sup> 'Bernier informs us of a very extraordinary custom which prevails to this day in the Empire of the Mogul. His Imperial Majesty is annually weighed upon his birth-day; and if it appears that since his former weighing he has made any considerable acquisition of flesh, it is matter of public rejoicings throughout his whole dominions.'—Chesterfield's *Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 37.

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think, only essentials, take pains and pleasure to see in their heir, all their favourite weaknesses and imperfections.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 306.*

### Field Sports.

Eat as much game as you please, but I hope you will never kill any yourself; and indeed, I think you are above any of those rustic illiberal sports, of guns, dogs, and horses, which characterize our English bumpkin country gentlemen; who are the most unlicked creatures in the world, unless sometimes by their hounds.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 228.*

. . .

I approve greatly of your father's method of shooting his game with his pen only, and heartily wish that when you have game of your own you may use no other. For my part I never in my life killed my own meat, but left it to the poulterer and butcher to do it for me. All those country sports, as they are called, are the effects of the ignorance and idleness of country esquires, who do not know what to do with their time, but people of sense and knowledge never give in to those illiberal amusements.

*Ib. p. 251.*

### The Fine Lady and the Fine Gentleman.

You will find, in every group of company, two principal figures, viz. the fine lady and the fine gentleman; who absolutely give the law of wit, language, fashion, and taste,  
to

to the rest of that society. There is always a strict, and often, for the time being, a tender alliance between these two figures. The lady looks upon her empire as founded upon the divine right of beauty, (and full as good a divine right it is, as any King, Emperor, or Pope, can pretend to); she requires, and commonly meets with, unlimited passive obedience. And why should she not meet with it? Her demands go no higher, than to have her unquestioned pre-eminence in beauty, wit, and fashion, firmly established. Few Sovereigns (by the way) are so reasonable. The fine gentleman's claims of right are, *mutatis mutandis*, the same; and though, indeed, he is not always a wit *de jure*, yet, as he is the wit *de facto* of that company, he is entitled to a share of your allegiance; and every body expects, at least, as much as they are entitled to, if not something more. Prudence bids you make your court to these joint Sovereigns; and no duty, that I know of, forbids it. Rebellion, here, is exceedingly dangerous, and inevitably punished by banishment, and immediate forfeiture of all your wit, manners, taste, and fashion: as, on the other hand, a cheerful submission, not without some flattery, is sure to procure you a strong recommendation, and most effectual pass, throughout all their, and probably the neighbouring dominions.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 97.*

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### First address.

I have frequently known a man's fortune decided for ever by his first address. If it is pleasing, people are hurried involuntarily into a persuasion that he has a merit, which possibly he has not; as, on the other hand, if it is ungraceful,



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ungraceful, they are immediately prejudiced against him ; and unwilling to allow him the merit which, it may be, he has.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 15.*

### Flattery.

A system-monger who, without knowing any thing of the world by experience, has formed a system of it in his dusty cell, lays it down, for example, that (from the general nature of mankind) flattery is pleasing. He will therefore flatter. But how? Why, indiscriminately. And, instead of repairing and heightening the piece judiciously, with soft colours, and a delicate pencil ; with a coarse brush, and a great deal of white-wash, he daubs and besmears the piece he means to adorn. His flattery offends even his patron ; and is almost too gross for his mistress. A man of the world knows the force of flattery as well as he does ; but then he knows how, when, and where to give it ; he proportions his dose to the constitution of the patient. He flatters by application, by inference, by comparison, by hint ; and seldom directly.

*Ib. iii. 51.*

### Flexibility of attention.

Sense must distinguish between what is impossible, and what is only difficult ; and spirit and perseverance will get the better of the latter. Every man is to be had one way or another, and every woman almost any way. I must not omit one thing, which is previously necessary to this, and indeed to every thing else ; which is attention, a flexibility of attention ; never to be wholly engrossed by any past or future object, but instantly directed to the present one, be it what it will.

*Ib. iii. 30.*

**Fools.**

Fools.

Never talk your best in the company of fools, for they would not understand you, and would perhaps suspect that you jeered them, as they commonly call it, but talk only the plainest common-sense to them, and very gravely, for there is no jesting, nor *badinage* with them<sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Godson*, p. 193.

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Foreign Fashions.

I must add, that if it be so genteel to copy the French, even in their weaknesses, I should humbly hope it might be thought still more so, to imitate them where they really deserve imitation, which is, in preferring every thing of their own to every thing of other people's. A Frenchman, who happened to be in England at the time of the last total eclipse of the sun, assured the people, whom he saw looking at it with attention, that it was not to be compared to a French eclipse: would some of our fine women emulate that spirit, and assert, as they might do with much more truth, that the foreign manufactures are not to be compared to the English; such a declaration would be worth two or three hundred thousand pounds a year to the kingdom, and operate more effectually than all the laws made for that purpose.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 50.

<sup>1</sup> 'It is related of the great Dr. Clarke that when in one of his leisure hours he was unbending himself with a few friends, in the most playful and frolicsome manner, he observed Beau Nash approaching; upon which he suddenly stopped. "My boys," said he; "let us be grave; here comes a fool."'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, i. 3.

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### Foreign Ministers.

The art of pleasing is more particularly necessary in your intended profession than perhaps in any other ; it is, in truth, the first half of your business ; for if you do not please the Court you are sent to, you will be of very little use to the Court you are sent from. Please the eyes and the ears, they will introduce you to the heart ; and, nine times in ten, the heart governs the understanding. Make your court particularly, and show distinguished attentions, to such men and women as are best at Court, highest in the fashion, and in the opinion of the public ; speak advantageously of them behind their backs, in companies who you have reason to believe will tell them again. Express your admiration of the many great men that the House of Savoy has produced<sup>1</sup> ; observe, that nature, instead of being exhausted by those efforts, seems to have redoubled them, in the persons of the present King, and the Duke of Savoy : wonder, at this rate, where it will end ; and conclude that it must end in the government of all Europe. Say this, likewise, where it will probably be repeated ; but say it unaffectedly, and, the last especially, with a kind of *enjouement*. These little arts are very allowable, and must be made use of in the course of the world ; they are pleasing to one party, useful to the other, and injurious to nobody.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 166.*

. . .

Your profession has this agreeable peculiarity in it, which is, that it is connected with, and promoted by pleasures ;

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Stanhope was at this time at Turin.

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and it is the only one in which a thorough knowledge of the world, polite manners, and an engaging address, are absolutely necessary. If a lawyer knows his law, a parson his divinity, and a *financier*<sup>1</sup> his calculations, each may make a figure and a fortune in his profession, without great knowledge of the world, and without the manners of gentlemen. But your profession throws you into all the intrigues, and cabals, as well as pleasures, of Courts: in those windings and labyrinths, a knowledge of the world, a discernment of characters, a suppleness and versatility of mind, and an elegance of manners, must be your clue: you must know how to sooth and lull the monsters that guard, and how to address and gain the fair that keep, the golden fleece. These are the arts and the accomplishments absolutely necessary for a foreign minister; in which it must be owned, to our shame, that most other nations out-do the English; and, *ceteris paribus*, a French minister will get the better of an English one, at any third Court in Europe. The French have something more *liant*, more insinuating and engaging in their manner, than we have. An English minister shall have resided seven years at a Court, without having made any one personal connection there, or without being intimate and domestic in any one house. He is always the English minister, and never naturalized. He receives his orders, demands an audience, writes an account of it to his Court, and his business is done. A French minister, on the contrary, has not been six weeks at a

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<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield's italics seem to show that he is using a French word. *Financier* is however in Johnson's *Dictionary*; but no authority is given for its use.

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Court, without having, by a thousand little attentions, insinuated himself into some degree of favour with the Prince, his wife, his mistress, his favourite, and his minister. He has established himself upon a familiar and domestic footing, in a dozen of the best houses of the place, where he has accustomed the people to be not only easy, but unguarded before him ; he makes himself at home there, and they think him so. By these means he knows the interior of those Courts, and can almost write prophecies to his own, from the knowledge he has of the characters, the humours, the abilities, or the weaknesses, of the actors.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 151.*

### **Fox-hunters.**

The French manner of hunting is gentleman-like ; ours is only for bumpkins and boobies. The poor beasts here are pursued and run down by much greater beasts than themselves ; and the true British fox-hunter is most undoubtedly a species appropriated and peculiar to this country, which no other part of the globe produces.

*Ib. iii. 220.*

### **Friends.**

If a man, with whom you are but barely acquainted, to whom you have made no offers, nor given any marks of friendship, makes you, on a sudden, strong professions of his, receive them with civility, but do not repay them with confidence ; he certainly means to deceive you ; for one man does not fall in love with another at sight. If a man uses strong protestations or oaths to make you believe

believe a thing, which is of itself so likely and probable, that the bare saying of it would be sufficient, depend upon it he lies, and is highly interested in making you believe it ; or else he would not take so much pains.

*Letters to his Son, i. 229.*

. . .

Be upon your guard against those, who, upon very slight acquaintance, obtrude their unasked and unmerited friendship and confidence upon you ; for they probably cram you with them only for their own eating : but, at the same time, do not roughly reject them upon that general supposition. Examine further, and see whether those unexpected offers flow from a warm heart and a silly head, or from a designing head and a cold heart ; for Knavery and Folly have often the same symptoms. In the first case, there is no danger in accepting them, *valeant quantum valere possunt*. In the latter case, it may be useful to seem to accept them, and artfully to turn the battery upon him who raised it.

There is an incontinency of friendship among young fellows who are associated by their mutual pleasure only, which has very frequently bad consequences. A parcel of warm hearts and unexperienced heads, heated by convivial mirth, and possibly a little too much wine, vow, and really mean at the time, eternal friendships to each other, and indiscreetly pour out their whole souls in common, and without the least reserve. These confidences are as indiscreetly repealed as they were made ; for new pleasures and new places soon dissolve this ill-cemented connection ; and then very ill uses are made of these rash confidences. Bear your part, however, in young companies ; nay, excel,

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if you can, in all the social and convivial joy and festivity that become youth. Trust them with your love tales, if you please ; but keep your serious views secret. Trust those only to some tried friend, more experienced than yourself, and who, being in a different walk of life from you, is not likely to become your rival ; for I would not advise you to depend so much upon the heroic virtue of mankind, as to hope, or believe, that your competitor will ever be your friend, as to the object of that competition.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 302.*

. . .

Those who in the common course of the world will call themselves your friends, or whom, according to the common notions of friendship, you may possibly think such, will never tell you of your faults, still less of your weaknesses. But on the contrary, more desirous to make you their friend, than to prove themselves yours, they will flatter both, and, in truth, not be sorry for either. Interiorly, most people enjoy the inferiority of their best friends<sup>1</sup>.

*ib. iii. 42.*

### General Reflections.

Before it is very long, I am of opinion, that you will both think and speak more favourably of women than you do now. You seem to think that, from Eve downwards, they have done a great deal of mischief. As for that lady, I give her up to you ; but, since her time, history will inform you, that men have done much more mischief in the world

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<sup>1</sup> ' In the adversity of our best friends we always find something which is not wholly displeasing to us.'—La Rochefoucauld.

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than women ; and, to say the truth, I would not advise you to trust either, more than is absolutely necessary. But this I will advise you to, which is, never to attack whole bodies of any kind ; for, besides that all general rules have their exception, you unnecessarily make yourself a great number of enemies, by attacking a *corps* collectively. Among women, as among men, there are good as well as bad, and it may be, full as many, or more, good than among men. This rule holds as to lawyers, soldiers, parsons, courtiers, citizens, &c. They are all men, subject to the same passions and sentiments, differing only in the manner, according to their several educations ; and it would be as imprudent as unjust to attack any of them by the lump. Individuals forgive sometimes ; but bodies and societies never do. Many young people think it very genteel and witty to abuse the clergy ; in which they are extremely mistaken ; since, in my opinion, parsons are very like men, and neither the better nor the worse for wearing a black gown. All general reflections, upon nations and societies, are the trite, thread-bare jokes of those who set up for wit without having any, and so have recourse to commonplace. Judge of individuals from your own knowledge of them, and not from their sex, profession, or denomination.

*Letters to his Son, i. 230.*

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### Generosity.

The reputation of generosity is to be purchased pretty cheap ; it does not depend so much upon a man's general expense, as it does upon his giving handsomely where it is proper to give at all. A man, for instance, who should give  
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a servant four shillings would pass for covetous, while he who gave him a crown, would be reckoned generous : so that the difference of those two opposite characters, turns upon one shilling. A man's character, in that particular, depends a great deal upon the report of his own servants ; a mere trifle above common wages, makes their report favourable.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 306.*

### Geniuses.

A drayman is probably born with as good organs as Milton, Locke, or Newton ; but, by culture, they are much more above him than he is above his horse. Sometimes, indeed, extraordinary geniuses have broken out by the force of nature, without the assistance of education ; but those instances are too rare for any body to trust to ; and even they would make a much greater figure, if they had the advantage of education into the bargain. If Shakespeare's genius had been cultivated, those beauties, which we so justly admire in him, would have been undisgraced by those extravagancies, and that nonsense, with which they are frequently accompanied. People are, in general, what they are made, by education and company, from fifteen to five-and-twenty.

*Id. i. 340.*

. . .

Military men have commonly seen a great deal of the world, and of Courts ; and nothing else can form a gentleman, let people say what they will of sense and learning : with both which a man may contrive to be a very disagreeable companion. I dare say, there are very few

Captains

Captains of foot, who are not much better company than Descartes or Sir Isaac Newton were. I honour and respect such superior geniuses ; but I desire to converse with people of this world, who bring into company their share, at least, of cheerfulness, good-breeding, and knowledge of mankind. In common life, one much oftener wants small money, and silver, than gold. Give me a man who has ready cash about him for present expenses ; sixpences, shillings, half-crowns, and crowns, which circulate easily : but a man who has only an ingot of gold about him, is much above common purposes, and his riches are not handy nor convenient. Have as much gold as you please in one pocket, but take care always to keep change in the other ; for you will much oftener have occasion for a shilling than for a guinea.

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*Letters to his Son, iii. 349.*

## A genteel carriage.

I am extremely glad to hear that you dance very genteelly ; for (by the maxim that *omne majus continet in se minus*) if you dance genteelly, I presume you walk, sit, and stand genteelly too ; things which are much more easy, though much more necessary, than dancing well. I have known many very genteel people, who could not dance well ; but I never knew any body dance very well, who was not genteel in other things. You will probably often have occasion to stand in circles, at the levées of princes and ministers, when it is very necessary, *de payer de sa personne, et d'être bien planté*, with your feet not too near nor too distant from each other. More people stand and walk, than sit genteelly. Awkward, ill-bred people, being ashamed, commonly sit up bolt upright, and stiff ; others, too negligent and easy, *se*

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*vautrent dans leur fauteuil*<sup>1</sup>, which is ungraceful and ill-bred, unless where the familiarity is extreme ; but a man of fashion makes himself easy, and appears so, by leaning gracefully, instead of lolling supinely ; and by varying those easy attitudes, instead of that stiff immobility of a bashful booby. You cannot conceive, nor can I express, how advantageous a good air, genteel motions, and engaging address are, not only among women, but among men, and even in the course of business ; they fascinate the affections, they steal a preference, they play about the heart till they engage it. I know a man, and so do you, who, without a grain of merit, knowledge, or talents, has raised himself millions of degrees above his level, singly by a good air, and engaging manners ; insomuch that the very prince who raised him so high, calls him, *mon aimable vaurien*<sup>2</sup>.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 199.

### Gentlemen.

x A gentleman is every man, who with a tolerable suit of clothes, a sword by his side, and a watch and snuff-box in his pockets, asserts himself to be a gentleman, swears with energy that he will be treated as such, and that he will cut the throat of any man who presumes to say the contrary.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 202.

### The Golden Age.

People know very little of the world, and talk nonsense, when they talk of plainness and solidity unadorned ; they

<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield, in another letter (iii. 204), translates this by 'welter in an easy chair.' *Ante*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Richelieu.

will do in nothing : mankind has been long out of a state of nature, and the golden age of native simplicity will never return. Whether for the better or the worse, no matter ; but we are refined ; and plain manners, plain dress, and plain diction, would as little do in life, as acorns, herbage, and the water of the neighbouring spring, would do at table.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 32.*

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## Good-breeding.

A friend of yours and mine has very justly defined good-breeding to be, *the result of much good-sense, some good-nature, and a little self-denial for the sake of others, and with a view to obtain the same indulgence from them.* Taking this for granted (as I think it cannot be disputed), it is astonishing to me that any body, who has good-sense and good-nature (and I believe you have both), can essentially fail in good-breeding. As to the modes of it, indeed, they vary according to persons, places, and circumstances ; and are only to be acquired by observation and experience ; but the substance of it is everywhere and eternally the same. Good manners are, to particular societies, what good morals are to society in general ; their cement, and their security. And, as laws are enacted to enforce good morals, or at least to prevent the ill effects of bad ones ; so there are certain rules of civility, universally implied and received, to enforce good manners, and punish bad ones. And indeed there seems to me to be less difference, both between the crimes and punishments, than at first one would imagine. The immoral man, who invades another's property, is justly hanged for it ; and the ill-bred man, who, by his ill-manners, invades

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and disturbs the quiet and comforts of private life, is by common consent as justly banished society. Mutual complaisances, attentions, and sacrifices of little conveniences, are as natural an implied compact between civilized people, as protection and obedience are between Kings and subjects : whoever, in either case, violates that compact, justly forfeits all advantages arising from it. For my own part, I really think, that, next to the consciousness of doing a good action, that of doing a civil one is the most pleasing : and the epithet which I should covet the most, next to that of Aristides, would be that of well-bred.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 247.*

. . .

The most familiar and intimate habitudes, connections, and friendships, require a degree of good-breeding, both to preserve and cement them. If ever a man and his wife absolutely lay aside all good-breeding, their intimacy will soon degenerate into a coarse familiarity, infallibly productive of contempt or disgust. The best of us have our bad sides ; and it is as imprudent, as it is ill-bred, to exhibit them.

*Id. ii. 251.*

. . .

Good-breeding is to all worldly qualifications, what charity is to all Christian virtues.

*Id. ii. 253.*

. . .

There is a natural good-breeding, which occurs to every man of common sense, and is practised by every man of common good-nature. This good-breeding is general, independent of modes ; and consists in endeavours to please and oblige

our

our fellow-creatures by all good offices, short of moral duties. This will be practised by a good-natured American savage, as essentially as by the best-bred European. But then, I do not take it to extend to the sacrifice of our own conveniences for the sake of other people's. Utility introduced this sort of good-breeding, as it introduced commerce; and established a truck of the little *agréments* and pleasures of life. I sacrifice such a conveniency to you, you sacrifice another to me; this commerce circulates, and every individual finds his account in it upon the whole. The third sort of good-breeding is local, and is variously modified, in not only different countries, but in different towns of the same country. But it must be founded upon the two former sorts: they are the matter; to which, in this case, fashion and custom only give the different shapes and impressions. Whoever has the first two sorts, will easily acquire this third sort of good-breeding, which depends singly upon attention and observation. It is, properly, the polish, the lustre, the last finishing strokes, of good-breeding. It is to be found only in capitals, and even there it varies: the good-breeding of Rome differing, in some things, from that of Paris; that of Paris, in others, from that of Madrid; and that of Madrid, in many things, from that of London. A man of sense, therefore, carefully attends to the local manners of the respective places where he is, and takes for his models those persons whom he observes to be at the head of the fashion and good-breeding. He watches how they address themselves to their superiors, how they accost their equals, and how they treat their inferiors; and lets none of those little niceties escape him; which are to good-breeding, what the last delicate and masterly touches are to a good picture; and which

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which the vulgar have no notion of, but by which good judges distinguish the master. He attends even to their air, dress, and motions, and imitates them, liberally and not servilely; he copies, but does not mimic. These personal graces are of very great consequence. They anticipate the sentiments, before merit can engage the understanding; they captivate the heart, and gave rise, I believe, to the extravagant notions of charms and philters. Their effects were so surprising, that they were reckoned supernatural. The most graceful and best-bred men, and the handsomest and genteelest women, give the most philters; and, as I verily believe, without the least assistance of the devil.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 253.*

. . .

With weak people (and they undoubtedly are three parts in four of mankind) good-breeding, address, and manners, are every thing; they can go no deeper: but let me assure you, that they are a great deal even with people of the best understanding. Where the eyes are not pleased, and the heart is not flattered, the mind will be apt to stand out. Be this right or wrong, I confess, I am so made myself. Awkwardness and ill-breeding shock me, to that degree, that where I meet with them, I cannot find in my heart to inquire into the intrinsic merit of that person; I hastily decide in myself, that he can have none; and am not sure, I should not even be sorry to know that he had any. I often paint you in my imagination, in your present *lontananza*; and, while I view you in the light of ancient and modern learning, useful and ornamental knowledge, I am charmed with the prospect; but when I view you in an-

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*Letters to his Son, ii. 261.*

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A man's own good-breeding is his best security against other people's ill-manners.

*Ib. iv. 304.*

## Good Company.

Good company is not what respective sets of company are pleased either to call or think themselves ; but it is that company which all the people of the place call, and acknowledge to be good company, notwithstanding some objections which they may form to some of the individuals who compose it. It consists chiefly (but by no means without exception) of people of considerable birth, rank, and character : for people of neither birth nor rank, are frequently, and very justly, admitted into it, if distinguished by any peculiar merit, or eminency in any liberal art or science. Nay, so motley a thing is good company, that many people, without birth, rank, or merit, intrude into it by their own forwardness, and others slide into it by the protection of some considerable person ; and some even of indifferent characters and morals make part of it. But, in the main, the good part preponderates, and people of infamous and blasted characters are never admitted. In this fashionable good company, the best manners and the best language of the place are

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most unquestionably to be learnt; for they establish, and give the tone to both, which are therefore called the language and manners of good company; there being no legal tribunal to ascertain either.

A company consisting wholly of people of the first quality, cannot, for that reason, be called good company, in the common acceptation of the phrase, unless they are, into the bargain, the fashionable and accredited company of the place; for people of the very first quality can be as silly, as ill-bred, and as worthless, as people of the meanest degree. On the other hand, a company consisting entirely of people of very low condition, whatever their merit or parts may be, can never be called good company; and consequently should not be much frequented, though by no means despised.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 79.

### Good manners.

Good manners are the settled medium of social, as *specie* is of commercial life; returns are equally expected for both; and people will no more advance their civility to a bear, than their money to a bankrupt.

*Ib.* iv. 36.

### A good name.

The good name that we leave behind at one place often gets before us to another, and is of great use<sup>1</sup>.

*Ib.* ii. 114.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Derrick,' said Johnson, 'may do very well as long as he can out-run his character; but the moment his character gets up with him it is all over.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, i. 394.

The

## The Graces.

I must, from time to time, remind you of what I have often recommended to you, and of what you cannot attend to too much ; *sacrifice to the Graces*<sup>1</sup>. The different effects of the same things, said or done, when accompanied or abandoned by them, is almost inconceivable. They prepare the way to the heart ; and the heart has such an influence over the understanding, that it is worth while to engage it in our interest. It is the whole of women, who are guided by nothing else ; and it has so much to say even with men, and the ablest men too, that it commonly triumphs in every struggle with the understanding.

*Letters to his Son, i. 326.*

. . .

Your sole business now is to shine, not to weigh. Weight without lustre is lead. You had better talk trifles elegantly, to the most trifling woman, than coarse inelegant sense to the most solid man ; you had better return a dropped fan genteelly, than give a thousand pounds awkwardly : and you had better refuse a favour gracefully, than grant it clumsily. Manner is all, in every thing : it is by manner only that you can please, and consequently rise. All your Greek will never advance you from secretary to envoy, or from envoy

<sup>1</sup> 'Plato used to say to Xenocrates, the philosopher, who had a morose and unpolished manner, "good Xenocrates, sacrifice to the Graces."'—Plutarch's *Lives*, ed. 1809, iii. 63. 'Prince Maurice never sacrificed to the Graces, nor conversed amongst men of quality, but had most used the company of ordinary and inferior men, with whom he loved to be very familiar.'—Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, ed. 1826, iv. 603.

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to ambassador ; but your address, your manner, your air, if good, very probably may. Marcel, your dancing-master, can be of much more use to you than Aristotle. I would, upon my word, much rather you had Lord Bolingbroke's style and eloquence, in speaking and writing, than all the learning of the Academy of Sciences, the Royal Society, and the two Universities united.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 146.

. . .

All these engaging and endearing accomplishments are mechanical, and to be acquired by care and observation, as easy as turning, or any mechanical trade. A common country fellow taken from the plough, and enlisted in an old corps, soon lays aside his shambling gait, his slouching air, his clumsy and awkward motions ; and acquires the martial air, the regular motions, and the whole exercise of the corps, and particularly of his right and left hand man. How so ? Not from his parts, which were just the same before as after he was enlisted ; but either from a commendable ambition of being like and equal to those he is to live with ; or else from the fear of being punished for not being so. If then both, or either of these motives, change such a fellow in about six months time, to such a degree, as that he is not to be known again, how much stronger should both these motives be with you, to acquire, in the utmost perfection, the whole exercise of the people of fashion, with whom you are to live all your life ! Ambition should make you resolve to be at least their equal in that exercise, as well as the fear of punishment ; which most inevitably will attend the want of it. By that exercise I mean the air, the manners, the graces, and the style of people of fashion.

*Ib.* iii. 185.

**Great**

**Great men.**

Mr. Pitt's ruling passion was an unbounded ambition, which, when supported by great abilities and crowned with great success, makes what the world calls 'a great man.'

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. App. p. 64.

**The Head reached through the Heart.**

He who addresses himself singly to another man's reason without endeavouring to engage his heart in his interest also, is no more likely to succeed, than a man who should apply only to a king's nominal minister, and neglect his favourite.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 53.

. . .

Smooth your way to the head, through the heart. The way of reason is a good one ; but it is commonly something longer, and perhaps not so sure.

*Ib.* iv. 299.

**Hearing ignorantly.**

It is a great advantage for any man, to be able to talk or to hear, neither ignorantly nor absurdly, upon any subject ; for I have known people, who have not said one word, hear ignorantly and absurdly ; it has appeared in their inattentive and unmeaning faces.

*Ib.* iii. 301.

**History.**

I look with some contempt upon those refining and sagacious historians, who ascribe all, even the most common events, to some deep political cause ; whereas mankind is made up of inconsistencies, and no man acts  
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invariably up to his predominant character. The wisest man sometimes acts weakly, and the weakest sometimes wisely. Our jarring passions, our variable humours, nay our greater or lesser degree of health and spirits, produce such contradictions in our conduct, that, I believe, those are the oftenest mistaken, who ascribe our actions to the most seemingly obvious motives: and I am convinced that a light supper, a good night's sleep, and a fine morning, have sometimes made a hero of the same man, who by an indigestion, a restless night, and a rainy morning, would have proved a coward. Our best conjectures, therefore, as to the true springs of actions, are but very uncertain; and the actions themselves are all that we must pretend to know from history. That Caesar was murdered by twenty-three conspirators, I make no doubt; but I very much doubt that their love of liberty, and of their country, was their sole, or even principal motive; and I dare say that, if the truth were known, we should find that many other motives at least concurred, even in the great Brutus himself; such as pride, envy, personal pique, and disappointment. Nay, I cannot help carrying my pyrrhonism still further, and extending it often to historical facts themselves, at least to most of the circumstances with which they are related; and every day's experience confirms me in this historical incredulity. Do we ever hear the most recent fact related exactly in the same way, by the several people who were at the same time eye-witnesses of it? No. One mistakes, another misrepresents; and others warp it a little to their own turn of mind, or private views. A man, who has been concerned in the transaction, will not write it fairly; and a man who has not, cannot.

*Letters to his Son, i. 344.*

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The speculative, cloistered pedant, in his solitary cell, forms systems of things as they should be, not as they are ; and writes as decisively and absurdly upon war, politics, manners, and characters, as that pedant talked who was so kind as to instruct Hannibal in the art of war. Such closet politicians never fail to assign the deepest motives for the most trifling actions ; instead of often ascribing the greatest actions to the most trifling causes, in which they would be much seldomer mistaken. They read and write of kings, heroes, and statesmen, as never doing any thing but upon the deepest principles of sound policy. But those who see and observe kings, heroes, and statesmen, discover that they have headaches, indigestions, humours, and passions, just like other people ; every one of which, in their turns, determine their wills, in defiance of their reason.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 278.*

. . .

I by no means advise you to throw away your time in ransacking, like a dull antiquarian, the minute and unimportant parts of remote and fabulous times. Let blockheads read what blockheads wrote.

*Ib. iii. 57.*

. . .

Voltaire's History of the Crusades shows, in a very short and strong light, the most immoral and wicked scheme that was ever contrived by knaves, and executed by madmen and fools, against humanity. There is a strange, but never-failing relation, between honest madmen and skilful knaves ; and wherever one meets with collected numbers of the former, one may be very sure that they are secretly directed by the latter. The Popes, who have generally been both  
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the ablest and the greatest knaves in Europe, wanted all the power and money of the East: for they had all that was in Europe already. The times and the minds favoured their design, for they were dark and uninformed; and Peter the Hermit, at once a knave and a madman, was a fine papal tool for so wild and wicked an undertaking. I wish we had good histories of every part of Europe, and indeed of the world, written upon the plan of Voltaire's *de l'Esprit humain*; for, I own, I am provoked at the contempt which most historians show for humanity in general; one would think by them, that the whole human species consisted but of about a hundred and fifty people, called and dignified (commonly very undeservedly too) by the titles of emperors, kings, popes, generals, and ministers. *Letters to his Son*, iv. 6.

### House of Lords.

The nation looked upon Pulteney as a deserter, and he shrunk into insignificancy and an earldom. He made several attempts afterwards to retrieve the opportunity he had lost, but in vain; his situation would not allow it. He was fixed in the House of Lords, that hospital of incurables, and his retreat to popularity was cut off; for the confidence of the public, when once great and once lost, is never to be regained.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. App. p. 32.

### Hurry.

Whoever is in a hurry, shows that the thing he is about is too big for him.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 197.

### Idleness.

Idleness is only the refuge of weak minds, and the holiday of fools. I do not call good company and liberal pleasures

pleasures, idleness ; far from it : I recommend to you a good share of both.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 186.*

..

I have so little to do, that I am surprised how I can find time to write to you so often. Do not stare at the seeming paradox ; for it is an undoubted truth, That the less one has to do, the less time one finds to do it in. One yawns, one procrastinates ; one can do it when one will, and therefore one seldom does it at all : whereas those who have great deal of business, must (to use a vulgar expression) buckle to it ; and then they always find time enough to do it in.

*Ib. iv. 95.*

## Ignorance.

I wish mankind would condescend to be respectfully ignorant of many things, which it is impossible they can ever know whilst in this world. But no, we must know everything, and our pride will not let us own our ignorance.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 300.*

## Imitation.

We are, in truth, more than half what we are, by imitation. The great point is, to choose good models, and to study them with care. People insensibly contract, not only the air, the manners, and the vices, of those with whom they commonly converse, but their virtues too, and even their way of thinking. This is so true, that I have known very plain understandings catch a certain degree of wit, by constantly conversing with those who had a great deal. Persist therefore, in keeping the best company, and you will insensibly become like them ; but if you add attention and observation, you will very soon be one of them. This

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inevitable contagion of company shows you the necessity of keeping the best, and avoiding all other ; for in every one, something will stick.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 327.*

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Every man becomes, to a certain degree, what the people he generally converses with are. He catches their air, their manners, and even their way of thinking. If he observes with attention, he will catch them soon, but if he does not, he will at long run contract them insensibly. I know nothing in the world but poetry, that is not to be acquired by application and care.

*Ib. iii. 24.*

### Inattention.

There is nothing so brutally shocking, nor so little forgiven, as a seeming inattention to the person who is speaking to you ; and I have known many a man knocked down, for (in my opinion) a much slighter provocation, than that shocking inattention which I mean. I have seen many people, who while you are speaking to them, instead of looking at, and attending to you, fix their eyes upon the ceiling, or some other part of the room, look out of the window, play with a dog, or twirl their snuff-box. Nothing discovers a little, futile, frivolous mind more than this, and nothing is so offensively ill-bred : it is an explicit declaration on your part, that every, the most trifling object, deserves your attention more than all that can be said by the person who is speaking to you. Judge of the sentiments of hatred and resentment, which such treatment must excite, in every breast where any degree of self-love dwells ; and I

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am sure, I never yet met with that breast where there was not a great deal. I repeat it again and again (for it is highly necessary for you to remember it), that sort of vanity and self-love is inseparable from human nature, whatever may be its rank or condition; even your footman will sooner forget and forgive a beating, than any manifest mark of slight and contempt.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 303.*

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## Indolence.

I look upon indolence as a sort of *suicide*; for the man is effectually destroyed, though the appetites of the brute may survive.

*Ib. iv. 62.*

## Invasions.

The French whisper in confidence, in order that it may be the more known and the more credited, that they intend to invade us this year, in no less than three places; that is, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Some of our great men, like the devils, believe and tremble; others, and one little one, whom I know, laugh at it; and, in general, it seems to be a poor instead of a formidable scarecrow. While *somebody* was at the head of a moderate army, and wanted (I know why) to be at the head of a great one, intended invasions were made an article of political faith; and the belief of them was required, as in the Church the belief of some absurdities, and even impossibilities, is required, upon pain of heresy, excommunication, and consequently damnation, if they tend to the power and interest of the heads of the Church. But now, there is a general toleration, and the best subjects, as well as the best Christians, may believe what their reason and their consciences suggest, it is gener-

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ally and rationally supposed, the French will threaten and not strike, since we are so well prepared, by both armies and fleets, to receive, and, I may add, to destroy them <sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son*, iv. 182.

### Ireland.

I hear with great pleasure that Ireland improves daily, and that a spirit of industry spreads itself, to the great increase of trade and manufacturers. I think I interest myself more in that country than in this; this is past its perfection, and seems gradually declining into weakness and caducity; that seems but tending to its vigour and perfection, and engages one's expectations and hopes; one loves a promising youth, one only esteems an old man; the former is a much quicker sentiment than the latter <sup>2</sup>.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 238.

### The *Je ne sais quoi*.

I dare say you have heard and read of the *Je ne sais quoi*, both in French and English, for the expression is now adopted in our language; but I question whether you have any clear idea of it, and indeed it is more easily felt than

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<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole, writing a fortnight later (June 1, 1759), says: 'I have not announced to you in form the invasion from France, of which all our newspapers have been so full, nor do I tell you every time the clock strikes. An invasion frightens one but once. I am grown to fear no invasions but those we make. Yet I believe there are people really afraid of this—I mean the new militia, who have received orders to march.'—Walpole's *Letters*, iii. 227.

<sup>2</sup> Written in 1751.

defined

defined. It is a most inestimable quality, and adorns every other. I will endeavour to give you a general notion of it, though I cannot an exact one ; experience must teach it you, and will, if you attend to it. It is in my opinion a compound of all the agreeable qualities of body and mind, in which no one of them predominates in such a manner as to give exclusion to any other. It is not mere wit, mere beauty, mere learning, nor indeed mere any one thing that produces it, though they all contribute something towards it. It is owing to this *Je ne sais quoi* that one takes a liking to some one particular person at first rather than to another. One feels oneself prepossessed in favour of that person without being enough acquainted with him to judge of his intrinsic merit or talents, and one finds oneself inclined to suppose him to have good sense, good nature, and good humour. A genteel address, graceful motions, a pleasing elocution, and elegance of style, are powerful ingredients in this compound. It is in short an extract of all the Graces.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 262.*

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### Kings.

The Emperor<sup>1</sup>, by your account, seems to be very well for an Emperor ; who, by being above the other monarchs in Europe, may justly be supposed to have had a proportionably worse education. I find, by your account of him, that he has been trained up to homicide, the only science in which princes are ever instructed ; and with good reason, as their greatness and glory singly depend upon the numbers

<sup>1</sup> Joseph II.

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of their fellow creatures, which their ambition exterminates. If a sovereign should, by great accident, deviate into moderation, justice, and clemency, what a contemptible figure would he make in the catalogue of princes ! I have always owned a great regard for King Log.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 242.*

. . .

As kings are begotten and born like other men, it is to be presumed that they are of the human species ; and perhaps, had they the same education, they might prove like other men. But, flattered from their cradles, their hearts are corrupted, and their heads are turned, so that they seem to be a species by themselves. No king ever said to himself, *Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto*<sup>1</sup>. Flattery cannot be too strong for them ; drunk with it from their infancy, like old drinkers, they require drams. They prefer a personal attachment to a public service, and reward it better. They are vain and weak enough to look upon it as a free-will offering to their merit, and not as a burnt-sacrifice to their power.

*Ib. iv. 301.*

### Knaves and Fools.

It is impossible for a man of sense not to have a contempt for fools, and for a man of honour not to have an abhorrence of knaves ; but you must gain upon yourself so as not to discover either, in their full extent. They are, I fear, too great a majority to contend with, and their numbers make them formidable, though not respectable. They commonly hang together, for the mutual use they make of each other.

<sup>1</sup> Terence, *Heaut.* i. 1. 25.

Show them a reserved civility, and let them not exist with regard to you. Do not play off the fool, as is too commonly done by would-be wits, nor shock the knave unnecessarily ; but have as little to do as is possible with either, and remember always as an undoubted truth, that whoever contracts a friendship with a knave or a fool, has something bad to do or to conceal.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 173.*

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## Knowledge and Manners.

Manners must adorn knowledge, and smooth its way through the world. Like a great, rough diamond, it may do very well in a closet, by way of curiosity, and also for its intrinsic value ; but it will never be worn, nor shine, if it is not polished.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 22.*

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Knowledge may give weight, but accomplishments only give lustre ; and many more people see than weigh.

*Ib. iv. 304.*

## Laughter.

Having mentioned laughing, I must particularly warn you against it : and I could heartily wish that you may often be seen to smile, but never heard to laugh, while you live. Frequent and loud laughter is the characteristic of folly and ill manners : it is the manner in which the mob express their silly joy, at silly things ; and they call it being merry. In my mind, there is nothing so illiberal, and so ill-bred, as audible laughter. True wit, or sense, never yet made any body laugh ; they are above it : they please the mind, and give a cheerfulness to the countenance. But it is low buffoonery,

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buffoonery, or silly accidents, that always excite laughter ; and that is what people of sense and breeding should show themselves above. A man's going to sit down, in the supposition that he has a chair behind him, and falling down upon his back for want of one, sets a whole company a laughing, when all the wit in the world would not do it ; a plain proof, in my mind, how low and unbecoming a thing laughter is. Not to mention the disagreeable noise that it makes, and the shocking distortion of the face that it occasions. Laughter is easily restrained by a very little reflection ; but, as it is generally connected with the idea of gaiety, people do not enough attend to its absurdity. I am neither of a melancholy nor a cynical disposition ; and am as willing and as apt to be pleased as anybody ; but I am sure that, since I have had the full use of my reason, nobody has ever heard me laugh<sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son*, i. 328.

. . .

Loud laughter is the mirth of the mob, who are only pleased with silly things ; for true wit or good sense never excited a laugh since the creation of the world. A man of parts and fashion is therefore only seen to smile, but never heard to laugh.

*Ib.* ii. 92.

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<sup>1</sup> Swift did not laugh. 'He had a countenance sour and severe, which he seldom softened by any appearance of gaiety. He stubbornly resisted any tendency to laughter.'—Johnson's *Works*, viii. 222. Neither did Pope laugh. 'By no merriment, either of others or his own, was he ever seen excited to laughter.'—*Ib.* p. 312. Lord Froth, in Congreve's *Double Dealer*, published the year before Chesterfield's birth, had said : 'There is nothing more unbecoming a man of quality than to laugh, it is such a vulgar expression of the passion. Everybody can laugh.'—Act i. sc. 1.

Lazy

**Lazy and Trifling Minds.**

There are two sorts of understandings ; one of which hinders a man from ever being considerable, and the other commonly makes him ridiculous ; I mean the lazy mind, and the trifling, frivolous mind. Yours, I hope, is neither. The lazy mind will not take the trouble of going to the bottom of any thing ; but, discouraged by the first difficulties (and every thing worth knowing or having is attended with some), stops short, contents itself with easy, and, consequently, superficial knowledge, and prefers a great degree of ignorance to a small degree of trouble. The trifling and frivolous mind is always busied, but to little purpose ; it takes little objects for great ones, and throws away upon trifles that time and attention, which only important things deserve. Knickknacks, butterflies, shells, insects, &c., are the objects of their most serious researches. They contemplate the dress, not the characters, of the company they keep. They attend more to the decorations of a play, than to the sense of it ; and to the ceremonies of a Court, more than to its politics.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 29, 31.*

**Leniores virtutes.**

Great talents, and great virtues (if you should have them) will procure you the respect and the admiration of mankind ; but it is the lesser talents, the *leniores virtutes*, which must procure you their love and affection. The former, unassisted and unadorned by the latter, will extort praise ; but will, at the same time, excite both fear and envy ; two sentiments absolutely incompatible with love and affection.

*Id. ii. 303.*

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We are all so formed that our understandings are generally the dupes of our hearts, that is of our passions ; and the surest way to the former, is through the latter, which must be engaged by the *leniores virtutes* alone, and the manner of exerting them. The insolent civility of a proud man, is (for example), if possible, more shocking than his rudeness could be ; because he shows you, by his manner, that he thinks it mere condescension in him ; and that his goodness alone bestows upon you, what you have no pretence to claim. He intimates his protection, instead of his friendship, by a gracious nod, instead of an usual bow ; and rather signifies his consent that you may, than his invitation that you should, sit, walk, eat, or drink with him.

The costly liberality of a purse-proud man, insults the distressed it sometimes relieves ; he takes care to make you feel your own misfortunes, and the difference between your situation and his ; both which he insinuates to be justly merited : yours, by your folly, his, by his wisdom. The arrogant pedant does not communicate, but promulgates his knowledge. He does not give it you, but he inflicts it upon you ; and is (if possible) more desirous to show you your own ignorance, than his own learning. Such manners as these, not only in the particular instances which I have mentioned, but likewise in all others, shock and revolt that little pride and vanity, which every man has in his heart ; and obliterate in us the obligation for the favour conferred, by reminding us of the motive which produced, and the manner which accompanied it <sup>1</sup>

*Letters to his Son, ii. 304.*

<sup>1</sup> ' Lord Orrery (said Johnson) was not dignified ; Lord Chesterfield was ; but he was insolent.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, iv. 174.

Adorn yourself with all those graces and accomplishments which, without solidity, are frivolous ; but without which, solidity is, to a great degree, useless. Take one man, with a very moderate degree of knowledge, but with a pleasing figure, a prepossessing address, graceful in all that he says and does, polite, *liant*, and, in short, adorned with all the lesser talents ; and take another man, with sound sense and profound knowledge, but without the above-mentioned advantages ; the former will not only get the better of the latter, in every pursuit of every *kind*, but in truth there will be no sort of competition between them.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 325.

Letters.

Your letters, except when upon a given subject, are exceedingly laconic, and neither answer my desires, nor the purpose of letters ; which should be familiar conversations between absent friends. As I desire to live with you upon the footing of an intimate friend, and not of a parent, I could wish that your letters gave me more particular accounts of yourself, and of your lesser transactions. When you write to me, suppose yourself conversing freely with me by the fire-side. In that case, you would naturally mention the incidents of the day ; as, where you had been, who you had seen, what you thought of them, &c. Do this in your letters ; acquaint me sometimes with your studies, sometimes with your diversions ; tell me of any new persons and characters that you meet with in company, and add your own observations upon them : in short, let me see more of you in your letters.

*Id.* ii. 75.

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The first thing necessary in writing letters of business, is extreme clearness and perspicuity ; every paragraph should be so clear, and unambiguous, that the dullest fellow in the world may not be able to mistake it, nor obliged to read it twice in order to understand it. This necessary clearness implies a correctness, without excluding an elegancy of style. Tropes, figures, antitheses, epigrams, &c., would be as misplaced, and as impertinent, in letters of business, as they are sometimes (if judiciously used) proper and pleasing in familiar letters, upon common and trite subjects. In business, an elegant simplicity, the result of care, not of labour, is required. Business must be well, not affectedly dressed ; but by no means negligently. Let your first attention be to clearness, and read every paragraph after you have written it, in the critical view of discovering whether it is possible that any one can mistake the true sense of it ; and correct it accordingly.

Neatness in folding up, sealing, and directing your packets, is by no means to be neglected : though, I dare say, you think it is. But there is something in the exterior, even of a packet, that may please or displease ; and consequently worth some attention.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 234-6.*

### Life.

Fontenelle's last words at a hundred were, *Je souffre d'être*<sup>1</sup>. Deaf and infirm as I am, I can with truth say

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<sup>1</sup> ' Drawing very near his end, he said, *this is the first death I have ever seen* ; and his physician having asked him whether he was in pain, or what he felt ; his answer was, *I feel nothing but a difficulty of existing.* Je ne sens autre chose qu'une difficulté d'être.'

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the same thing at sixty-three. In my mind, it is only the strength of our passions, and the weakness of our reason, that make us so fond of life ; but, when the former subside and give way to the latter, we grow weary of being, and willing to withdraw.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 104.*

## Lines of Life.

I entirely agree with you in your resolution of breeding up all your sons to some profession or other, but, at the same time, your usual vivacity carries you much too prematurely, to fix their several destinations. You must not so much consider what you would choose for them, as what they are likely to succeed best in ; and that cannot be discovered these seven or eight years. It is certain that, whether from nature, or from early accidental impressions in their youth, I will not say, it being very hard to distinguish, children, after eight or ten years of age, often show a determined preference for some particular profession, which it would be imprudent for their parents to oppose, because, in that case, they would surely not succeed so well, or perhaps at all, in any other. In the meantime, give them all eventually a good education, so as to qualify them, to a certain degree, for whatever profession you and they may hereafter agree upon ; for I repeat it again, their approbation is full as necessary as yours. These, however, are the general rules, by which I would point out to them the professions which I should severally wish them to apply to. I would recommend the army, or the navy, to a boy of a warm constitution, strong animal spirits, and a cold genius ; to one of quick, lively, and distinguishing parts, the law ; to a good, dull, and decent boy, the church ; and trade to an acute, thinking,

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ing, and laborious one. I wish that my godson, for whom you must allow me some degree of predilection, may take a liking to the law, for that is the truly independent profession. People will only trust their property to the care of the ablest lawyer, be he whig or tory, well or ill at Court.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 187.*

### Little Things.

It is the character of an able man to despise little things in great business ; but then he knows what things are little, and what not. He does not suppose things little, because they are commonly called so ; but by the consequences that may or may not attend them. If gaining people's affections, and interesting their hearts in your favour, be of consequence, as it undoubtedly is, he knows very well that a happy concurrence of all these, commonly called little things, manners, air, address, graces, &c., is of the utmost consequence, and will never be at rest till he has acquired them. The world is taken by the outside of things, and we must take the world as it is ; you or I cannot set it right. I know, at this time, a man of great quality and station, who has not the parts of a porter ; but raised himself to the station he is in, singly by having a graceful figure, polite manners, and an engaging address : which, by the way, he only acquired by habit ; for he had not sense enough to get them by reflection <sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 277.*

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<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield refers, I think, to the Duke of Richelieu. See *ante*, p. 66.

**Loving**

## Loving and Hating.

I have often thought, and still think, that there are few things which people in general know less than how to love and how to hate. They hurt those they love, by a mistaken indulgence, by a blindness, nay, often a partiality to their faults. Where they hate, they hurt themselves, by ill-timed passion and rage.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 271.*

## Lying.

The greatest fools are the greatest liars. For my own part, I judge of every man's truth by his degree of understanding.

*Id. i. 274.*

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There are people who indulge themselves in a sort of lying, which they reckon innocent, and which in one sense is so ; for it hurts nobody but themselves. This sort of lying is the spurious offspring of vanity, begotten upon folly : these people deal in the marvellous ; they have seen some things that never existed ; they have seen other things which they never really saw, though they did exist, only because they were thought worth seeing. Has anything remarkable been said or done in any place, or in any company, they immediately present and declare themselves eye or ear witnesses of it. They have done feats themselves, unattempted, or at least unperformed by others. They are always the heroes of their own fables ; and think that they gain consideration, or at least present attention, by it. Whereas, in truth, all they get is ridicule and contempt, not without a good degree of distrust : for one must naturally conclude, that he who

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will tell any lie from idle vanity, will not scruple telling a greater for interest. Had I really seen anything so very extraordinary as to be almost incredible, I would keep it to myself, rather than, by telling it, give any one body room to doubt for one minute of my veracity.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 316.*

### Man.

I have often told you (and it is most true) that, with regard to mankind, we must not draw general conclusions from certain particular principles, though, in the main, true ones. We must not suppose that, because a man is a rational animal, he will, therefore, always act rationally; or, because he has such or such a predominant passion, that he will act invariably and consequentially in the pursuit of it. No. We are complicated machines; and though we have one mainspring, that gives motion to the whole, we have an infinity of little wheels, which, in their turns, retard, precipitate, and sometimes stop that motion. Let us exemplify. I will suppose ambition to be (as it commonly is) the predominant passion of a Minister of State; and I will suppose that Minister to be an able one. Will he, therefore, invariably pursue the object of that predominant passion? May I be sure that he will do so and so, because he ought? Nothing less. Sickness, or low spirits, may damp this predominant passion; humour and peevishness may triumph over it; inferior passions may, at times, surprise it, and prevail. Is this ambitious statesman amorous? Indiscreet and unguarded confidences, made in tender moments, to his wife or his mistress, may defeat all his schemes. Is he avaricious? Some great lucrative object, suddenly

suddenly presenting itself, may unravel all the work of his ambition. Is he passionate? Contradiction and provocation (sometimes, it may be, too, artfully intended) may extort rash and inconsiderate expressions, or actions, destructive of his main object. Is he vain, and open to flattery? An artful, flattering favourite may mislead him; and even laziness may, at certain moments, make him neglect or omit the necessary steps to that height which he wants to arrive at. Seek first, then, for the predominant passion of the character which you mean to engage and influence, and address yourself to it; but without defying or despising the inferior passions: get them in your interest too, for now and then they will have their turns. In many cases you may not have it in your power to contribute to the gratification of the prevailing passion; then take the next best to your aid. There are many avenues to every man; and, when you cannot get at him through the great one, try the serpentine ones, and you will arrive at last.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 297.*

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Though men are all of one composition, the several ingredients are so differently proportioned in each individual, that no two are exactly alike; and no one, at all times, like himself. The ablest man will, sometimes, do weak things; the proudest man, mean things; the honestest man, ill things; and the wickedest man, good ones. Study individuals, then; and if you take (as you ought to do) their outlines from their prevailing passion, suspend your last finishing strokes till you have attended to, and discovered the operations of their inferior passions, appetites, and

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and humours. A man's general character may be that of the honestest man of the world: do not dispute it; you might be thought envious or ill-natured: but, at the same time, do not take this probity upon trust, to such a degree as to put your life, fortune, or reputation, in his power. This honest man may happen to be your rival in power, in interest, or in love; three passions that often put honesty to most severe trials, in which it is too often cast: but first analyse this honest man yourself; and then, only, you will be able to judge, how far you may, or may not, with safety, trust him.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 300.*

. . .

The mind of man is so variable, so different from itself in prosperity and adversity, in sickness and in health, in high or in low spirits, that I take the effects as I find them, without presuming to trace them up to their true and secret causes. I know by not knowing even myself how little I know of that good, that bad, that knowing, that ignorant, that reasoning and unreasonable creature, man.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. App. p. 17.*

### Les Manières Nobles.

What the French justly call *les manières nobles*, are only to be acquired in the very best companies. They are the distinguishing characteristics of men of fashion: people of low education never wear them so close, but that some part or other of the original vulgarism appears. *Les manières nobles* equally forbid insolent contempt, or low envy and jealousy. Low people, in good circumstances, fine clothes, and equipages, will insolently show contempt for all those

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who cannot afford as fine clothes, as good an equipage, and who have not (as their term is) as much money in their pockets: on the other hand, they are gnawed with envy, and cannot help discovering it, of those who surpass them in any of these articles, which are far from being sure criterions of merit. They are, likewise, jealous of being slighted; and consequently, suspicious and captious: they are eager and hot about trifles; because trifles were, at first, their affairs of consequence. *Les manières nobles* imply exactly the reverse of all this.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 99.

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## Manner and Matter.

Surely, before the end of the world, people, and you in particular, will discover, that the *manner*, in everything, is at least as important as the matter; and that the latter never can please, without a good degree of elegancy in the former. This holds true in everything in life: in writing, conversing, business, the help of the Graces is absolutely necessary; and whoever vainly thinks himself above them, will find he is mistaken, when it will be too late to court them, for they will not come to strangers of an advanced age.

*Ib.* iv. 177.

## Marriage.

I have at last done the best office that can be done, to most married people; that is, I have fixed the separation between my brother and his wife; and the definite treaty of peace will be proclaimed in about a fortnight; for the only solid and lasting peace, between a man and his wife, is, doubtless, a separation.

*Ib.* iv. 200.

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## Mastery of the Temper.

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There are but two objects in marriage, love or money. If you marry for love, you will certainly have some very happy days, and probably many very uneasy ones ; if for money, you will have no happy days and probably no uneasy ones ; in this latter case let the woman at least be such a one that you can live decently and amicably with, otherwise it is a robbery.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 390.*

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In matters of religion and matrimony I never give any advice : because I will not have anybody's torments in this world or the next laid to my charge.

*Letter to A. C. Stanhope. Ib. p. 367.*

### Mastery of the Temper.

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I recommended to you, in my last, an innocent piece of art ; that of flattering people behind their backs, in presence of those, who, to make their own court, much more than for your sake, will not fail to repeat, and even amplify the praise to the party concerned. This is, of all flattery, the most pleasing, and consequently the most effectual. There are other, and many other inoffensive arts of this kind, which are necessary in the course of the world, and which he who practises the earliest, will please the most, and rise the soonest. The spirits and vivacity of youth are apt to neglect them as useless, or reject them as troublesome. But subsequent knowledge and experience of the world remind us of their importance, commonly when it is too late. The principal of these things, is the mastery of one's temper, and that coolness of mind, and serenity of countenance,

countenance, which hinders us from discovering, by words, actions, or even looks, those passions or sentiments by which we are inwardly moved or agitated; and the discovery of which gives cooler and abler people such infinite advantages over us, not only in great business, but in all the most common occurrences of life. A man who does not possess himself enough to hear disagreeable things, without visible marks of anger and change of countenance, or agreeable ones without sudden bursts of joy, and expansion of countenance, is at the mercy of every artful knave, or pert coxcomb: the former will provoke or please you by design, to catch unguarded words or looks; by which he will easily decipher the secrets of your heart, of which you should keep the key yourself, and trust it with no man living. The latter will, by his absurdity, and without intending it, produce the same discoveries, of which other people will avail themselves.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 167.*

## Measures not men.

I have opposed measures not men, and the change of two or three men only is not a sufficient pledge to me that measures will be changed<sup>1</sup>.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 226.*

## Men of Fashion.

Your great point at present at Paris, to which all other considerations must give way, is to become entirely a man

<sup>1</sup> The letter from which this passage is quoted is dated March 6, 1742. Goldsmith, in *The Good-natured Man* (1768), makes Lofty say: 'Measures not men have always been my mark' (Act ii.) Burke, in his *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770), attacks the cant of *not men but measures*.'

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of fashion ; to be well bred without ceremony, easy without negligence, steady and intrepid with modesty, genteel without affectation, insinuating without meanness, cheerful without being noisy, frank without indiscretion, and secret without mysteriousness ; to know the proper time and place for whatever you say or do, and to do it with an air of condition : all this is not so soon nor so easily learned as people imagine, but requires observation and time. The world is an immense folio, which demands a great deal of time and attention to be read and understood as it ought to be.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 103.*

### Men of Honour.

A man of honour is one who peremptorily affirms himself to be so, and who will cut anybody's throat that questions it, though upon the best grounds. He is infinitely above the restraints which the laws of God or man lay upon vulgar minds, and knows no other ties but those of honour ; of which word he is to be the sole expounder. He must strictly adhere to a party denomination, though he may be utterly regardless of its principles. His expense should exceed his income considerably, not for the necessities, but for the superfluities of life, that the debts he contracts may do him honour. There should be a haughtiness and insolence in his deportment which is supposed to result from conscious honour. If he be choleric, and wrong-headed into the bargain, with a good deal of animal courage, he acquires the glorious character of a man of nice and jealous honour : and, if all these qualifications are duly seasoned with the genteelest vices, the man of honour is complete, anything

anything his wife, children, servants, or tradesmen may think to the contrary, notwithstanding.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 53.

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To prevent mistakes, I must observe that there is a great difference between a man of honour and a person of honour. By persons of honour were meant, in the latter end of the last century, bad authors and poets of noble birth, who were but just not fools enough to prefix their names in great letters to the prologues, epilogues, and sometimes even the plays, with which they entertained the public. But now that our nobility are too generous to interfere in the trade of us poor professed authors, or to eclipse our performances by the distinguished and superior excellency and lustre of theirs, the meaning at present of a person of honour is reduced to the simple idea of a person of illustrious birth.

*Ib.* ii. 205.

### Men of pleasure.

The character which most young men first aim at is that of a man of pleasure; but they generally take it upon trust; and, instead of consulting their own taste and inclinations, they blindly adopt whatever those with whom they chiefly converse are pleased to call by the name of pleasure; and a *man of pleasure*, in the vulgar acceptance of that phrase, means only a beastly drunkard, an abandoned debauchee, and a profligate swearer and curser. As it may be of use to you, I am not unwilling, though at the same time ashamed, to own that the vices of my youth proceeded much more from my silly resolution of being  
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what I heard called a man of pleasure, than from my own inclinations. I always naturally hated drinking; and yet I have often drunk, with disgust at the time, attended by great sickness the next day, only because I then considered drinking as a necessary qualification for a fine gentleman, and a man of pleasure.

The same as to gaming. I did not want money, and consequently had no occasion to play for it; but I thought play another necessary ingredient in the composition of a man of pleasure, and accordingly I plunged into it without desire, at first; sacrificed a thousand real pleasures to it; and made myself solidly uneasy by it, for thirty the best years of my life.

I was even absurd enough, for a little while, to swear, by way of adorning and completing the shining character which I affected; but this folly I soon laid aside, upon finding both the guilt and the indecency of it.

Thus seduced by fashion, and blindly adopting nominal pleasures, I lost real ones; and my fortune impaired, and my constitution shattered, are, I must confess, the just punishment of my errors. Take warning then by them; choose your pleasures for yourself, and do not let them be imposed upon you. Follow nature, and not fashion: weigh the present enjoyment of your pleasures, against the necessary consequences of them, and then let your own common sense determine your choice. *Letters to his Son, i. 258.*

. . .

I hope you earn your pleasures, and consequently taste them; for, by the way, I know a great many men, who call themselves men of pleasure, but who, in truth, have none.

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They adopt other people's indiscriminately, but without any taste of their own. I have known them often inflict excesses upon themselves, because they thought them genteel ; though they sat as awkwardly upon them as other people's clothes would have done. Have no pleasures but your own, and then you will shine in them.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 337.*

. . .

Few men can be men of pleasure, every man may be a rake.

*Ib. iii. 68.*

### Merit.

I have often heard and read of oppressed and unrewarded merit, but I have oftener (I might say always) seen great merit make its way, and meet with its reward, to a certain degree at least, in spite of all difficulties.

*Ib. ii. 4.*

### Metaphysics.

I look upon all metaphysics to be guesswork of imagination.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 217.*

### Method.

At your age you have no right nor claim to laziness ; I have, if I please, being *emeritus*. You are but just lifted in the world, and must be active, diligent, indefatigable. If ever you propose commanding with dignity, you must serve up to it with diligence. Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day. Despatch is the soul of business ; and nothing contributes more to despatch than method. Lay down a method for everything, and stick to it inviolably, as far

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far as unexpected incidents may allow. Fix one certain hour and day in the week for your accompts, and keep them together in their proper order ; by which means they will require very little time, and you can never be much cheated. Whatever letters and papers you keep, docket and tie them up in their respective classes, so that you may instantly have recourse to any one. Lay down a method also for your reading, for which you allot a certain share of your mornings ; let it be in a consistent and consecutive course, and not in that desultory and immethodical manner, in which many people read scraps of different authors, upon different subjects. Keep a useful and short common-place book of what you read, to help your memory only, and not for pedantic quotations. Never read history without having maps, and a chronological book, or tables, lying by you, and constantly recurred to ; without which, history is only a confused heap of facts. One method more I recommend to you, by which I have found great benefit, even in the most dissipated part of my life ; that is, to rise early, and at the same hour every morning, how late soever you may have sat up the night before. This secures you an hour or two, at least, of reading or reflection, before the common interruptions of the morning begin ; and it will save your constitution, by forcing you to go to bed early at least one night in three.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 335.*

### Middle class.

The middle class of people in this country, though generally straining to imitate their betters, have not yet shaken off the prejudices of their education ; very many of them still believe in a supreme being, in a future state of rewards

rewards and punishments, and retain some coarse, homespun notions of moral good and evil. The rational system of materialism has not yet reached them, and, in my opinion, it may be full as well it never should; for, as I am not of levelling principles, I am for preserving a due subordination from inferiors to superiors, which an equality of profligacy must totally destroy.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 301.

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## Mimicry.

Mimicry, which is the common and favourite amusement of little, low minds, is in the utmost contempt with great ones. It is the lowest and most illiberal of all buffoonery. Pray, neither practise it yourself nor applaud it in others. Besides that, the person mimicked is insulted; and, as I have often observed to you before, an insult is never forgiven<sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 91.

## Minuet time.

I will mention to you a trifling and perhaps, you will think, a ridiculous receipt, toward checking the excess of passion, of which I think that I have experienced the utility myself. Do everything in minuet time, speak, think, and move always in that measure, equally free from the dullness of slow, or the hurry and huddle of quick time. This movement, moreover, will allow you some moments to think forwards, and the Graces to accompany what you say or do, for they are never

<sup>1</sup> 'Mimicry,' said Johnson, 'is making a very mean use of a man's powers. But to be a good mimic requires great powers; great acuteness of observation, great retention of what is observed, and great pliancy of organs to represent what is observed.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 154.

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represented as either running or dozing. Observe a man in a passion, see his eyes glaring, his face inflamed, his limbs trembling, and his tongue stammering and faulting with rage, and then ask yourself calmly whether you would upon any account be that human wild beast. Such creatures are hated and dreaded in all companies where they are let loose, as people do not choose to be exposed to the disagreeable necessity of either knocking down these brutes or being knocked down by them. Do, on the contrary, endeavour to be cool and steady upon all occasions. The advantages of such a steady calmness are innumerable, and would be too tedious to relate. It may be acquired by care and reflection. If it could not, that reason which distinguishes men from brutes, would be given us to very little purpose. As a proof of this, I never saw, and scarcely ever heard, of a Quaker in a passion. In truth, there is in that sect, a decorum, decency, and an amiable simplicity, that I know in no other.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 178.*

### **Models: how to be chosen.**

Observe the shining part of every man of fashion, who is liked and esteemed; attend to and imitate that particular accomplishment for which you hear him chiefly celebrated and distinguished: then collect those various parts, and make yourself a mosaic of the whole. No one body possesses every thing, and almost every body possesses some one thing, worthy of imitation: only choose your models well; and in order to do so, choose by your ear more than by your eye. The best model is always that which is most universally allowed to be the best, though in strictness it may possibly

possibly not be so. We must take most things as they are, we cannot make them what we would, nor often what they should be ; and, where moral duties are not concerned, it is more prudent to follow than to attempt to lead.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 19.*

### Modesty.

Take this rule for granted as a never-failing one ;— that you must never seem to affect the character in which you have a mind to shine. Modesty is the only sure bait, when you angle for praise. The affectation of courage will make even a brave man pass only for a bully ; as the affectation of wit will make a man of parts pass for a coxcomb. By this modesty, I do not mean timidity, and awkward bashfulness. On the contrary, be inwardly firm and steady, know your own value, whatever it may be, and act upon that principle ; but take great care to let nobody discover that you do know your own value. Whatever real merit you have, other people will discover ; and people always magnify their own discoveries, as they lessen those of others.

*Ib. iii. 20.*

### Natural affection.

There is no such thing as natural affection ; for, if there were, some inward sentiment must necessarily and reciprocally discover the parent to the child, and the child to the parent, without any exterior indications, knowledge, or acquaintance whatsoever ; which never happened, since the creation of the world, whatever poets, romance or novel writers, and such Sentiment-mongers, may be pleased to say to the contrary.

*Ib. i. 300.*

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### Natural rights.

Most men think that they have an equal natural right to riches, and equal abilities to make the proper use of them ; but not very many of them have the impudence to think themselves qualified for power.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. App. p. 65.*

### Negotiations.

If two men of equal talents negotiate together, he who best understands the language in which the negotiation is carried on, will infallibly get the better of the other.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 17.*

### New Year's Day.

This is the season of well-bred lies indiscriminately told by all to all ; professions and wishes unfelt and unmeant, degraded by use and profaned by falsehood, are lavished with profusion.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 150.*

### Operas.

Signior Metastasio attempted some time ago a very dangerous innovation. He tried gently to throw some sense into his operas ; but it did not take : the consequences were obvious ; and nobody knew where they would stop.

The whole skill and judgment of the poet now consists in selecting about a hundred words, for the opera vocabulary does not exceed that number, that terminate in liquids and vowels, and rhyme to each other. These words excite ideas in the hearer, though they were not the result of any in the poet. Thus the word *tortorella*, stretched out to a quaver of a quarter of an hour, excites in us the ideas of  
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tender and faithful love ; but if it is succeeded by *navicella*, that soothing idea gives way to the boisterous and horrid one of a skiff, that is, a heart, tossed by the winds and waves upon the main ocean of love. The handcuffs and fetters in which the hero commonly appears, at the end of the second, or beginning of the third act, indicate captivity ; and when properly jingled to a pathetic piece of recitativo upon *questi ceppi*, are really very moving, and inspire a love of liberty.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 228.

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Whenever I go to an opera, I leave my sense and reason at the door with my half guinea, and deliver myself up to my eyes and my ears.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 257.

## The ornamental and the solid.

I knew a young man, who being just elected a member of Parliament, was laughed at for being discovered, through the keyhole of his chamber door, speaking to himself in the glass, and forming his looks and gestures. I could not join in that laugh ; but, on the contrary, thought him much wiser than those who laughed at him ; for he knew the importance of those little graces in a public assembly, and they did not. Your little person (which I am told by the way is not ill turned), whether in a laced coat, or a blanket, is specifically the same ; but yet, I believe, you choose to wear the former, and you are in the right, for the sake of pleasing more. The worst-bred man in Europe, if a lady let fall her fan, would certainly take it up and give it her ; the best-bred man in Europe could do no more. The difference, however, would be considerable ; the latter would please

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please by doing it gracefully ; the former would be laughed at for doing it awkwardly. I repeat it, and repeat it again, and shall never cease repeating it to you : air, manners, graces, style, elegance, and all those ornaments, must now be the only objects of your attention ; it is now, or never, that you must acquire them. Postpone, therefore, all other considerations ; make them now your serious study : you have not one moment to lose. The solid and the ornamental united are undoubtedly best ; but were I reduced to make an option, I should without hesitation choose the latter.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 127.*

### Parallel cases.

Some great scholars, most absurdly, draw all their maxims, both for public and private life, from what they call parallel cases in the ancient authors ; without considering that, in the first place, there never were, since the creation of the world, two cases exactly parallel : and, in the next place, that there never was a case stated, or even known, by any historian, with every one of its circumstances ; which, however, ought to be known, in order to be reasoned from. Reason upon the case itself, and the several circumstances that attend it, and act accordingly : but not from the authority of ancient poets or historians. Take into your consideration, if you please, cases seemingly analogous ; but take them as helps only, not as guides. We are really so prejudiced by our educations, that, as the ancients deified their heroes, we deify their madmen : of which, with all due regard to antiquity, I take Leonidas and Curtius to have been two distinguished ones. And yet a solid pedant would, in a speech in Parliament, relative to a tax of two pence in the pound upon

upon some commodity or other, quote those two heroes, as examples of what we ought to do, and suffer for our country. I have known these absurdities carried so far, by people of injudicious learning, that I should not be surprised if some of them were to propose, while we are at war with the Gauls, that a number of geese should be kept in the Tower, upon account of the infinite advantage which Rome received, *in a parallel case*, from a certain number of geese in the Capitol. This way of reasoning, and this way of speaking, will always form a poor politician, and a puerile declaimer.

*Letters to his Son, i. 321.*

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## Parliament.

It is now above forty years since I have never spoken nor written one single word, without giving myself at least one moment's time to consider whether it was a good one or a bad one, and whether I could not find out a better in its place. An unharmonious and rugged period, at this time, shocks my ears ; and I, like all the rest of the world, will willingly exchange, and give up some degree of rough sense, for a good degree of pleasing sound. I will freely and truly own to you, without either vanity or false modesty, that whatever reputation I have acquired as a speaker, is more owing to my constant attention to my diction, than to my matter, which was necessarily just the same as other people's. When you come into Parliament, your reputation as a speaker will depend much more upon your words, and your periods, than upon the subject. The same matter occurs equally to everybody of common-sense, upon the same question ; the dressing it well, is what excites the attention and admiration of the audience.

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The vulgar, who are always mistaken, look upon a speaker and a comet with the same astonishment and admiration, taking them both for preternatural phenomena. This error discourages many young men from attempting that character ; and good speakers are willing to have their talent considered as something very extraordinary, if not a peculiar gift of God to his elect. But let you and I <sup>1</sup> analyse and simplify this good speaker ; let us strip him of those adventitious plumes, with which his own pride and the ignorance of others have decked him, and we shall find the true definition of him to be no more than this :—A man of good common sense, who reasons justly, and expresses himself elegantly on that subject upon which he speaks. There is, surely, no witchcraft in this. A man of sense, without a superior and astonishing degree of parts, will not talk nonsense upon any subject ; nor will he, if he has the least taste or application, talk inelegantly. What, then, does all this mighty art and mystery of speaking in Parliament amount to ? Why, no more than this, that the man who speaks in the House of Commons, speaks in that House, and to four hundred people, that opinion, upon a given subject, which he would make no difficulty of speaking in any house in England, round the fire, or at table, to any fourteen people whatsoever ; better judges, perhaps, and severer critics of what he says, than any fourteen gentlemen of the House of Commons.

I have spoken frequently in Parliament, and not always without some applause ; and therefore I can assure you, from my experience, that there is very little in it. The elegance

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<sup>1</sup> This error in grammar comes in curiously here.

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of the style, and the turn of the periods, make the chief impression upon the hearers. Give them but one or two round and harmonious periods in a speech, which they will retain and repeat, and they will go home as well satisfied as people do from an opera, humming all the way one or two favourite tunes that have struck their ears and were easily caught. Most people have ears, but few have judgment ; tickle those ears, and, depend upon it, you will catch their judgments, such as they are.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 283.*

. . .

Know that no man can make a figure in this country, but by Parliament. Your fate depends upon your success there as a speaker ; and, take my word for it, that success turns much more upon manner than matter. Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Murray<sup>1</sup>, the solicitor-general, are, beyond comparison, the best speakers. Why ? Only because they are the best orators. They alone can inflame or quiet the House ; they alone are so attended to, in that numerous and noisy assembly, that you might hear a pin fall while either of them is speaking. Is it that their matter is better, or their arguments stronger, than other people's ? Does the House expect extraordinary informations from them ? Not in the least ; but the House expects pleasure from them, and therefore attends ; finds it, and therefore approves. Mr. Pitt, particularly, has very little Parliamentary knowledge ; his matter is generally flimsy, and his arguments often weak : but his eloquence is superior, his action graceful, his enunciation just and

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<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Earl of Mansfield.

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harmonious ; his periods are well turned, and every word he makes use of is the very best, and the most expressive, that can be used in that place. This, and not his matter, made him pay-master, in spite of both king and ministers. From this, draw the obvious conclusion. The same thing holds full as true in conversation ; where even trifles, elegantly expressed, well looked, and accompanied with graceful action, will ever please, beyond all the home-spun, unadorned sense in the world.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 124.*

. . .

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Every numerous assembly is *mob*, let the individuals who compose it be what they will. Mere reason and good sense is never to be talked to a mob : their passions, their sentiments, their senses, and their seeming interests, are alone to be applied to. Understanding they have collectively none ; but they have ears and eyes, which must be flattered and seduced ; and this can only be done by eloquence, tuneful periods, graceful action, and all the various parts of oratory. When you come into the House of Commons, if you imagine that speaking plain and unadorned sense and reason will do your business, you will find yourself mostly grossly mistaken. As a speaker, you will be ranked only according to your eloquence, and by no means according to your matter ; everybody knows the matter almost alike, but few can adorn it. I was early convinced of the importance and powers of eloquence ; and from that moment I applied myself to it. I resolved not to utter one word, even in common conversation, that should not be the most expressive, and the most elegant, that the language could supply me with for that purpose ;

purpose ; by which means I have acquired such a certain degree of habitual eloquence, that I must now really take some pains, if I would express myself very inelegantly.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 145.*

. . .

As the House of Commons is the theatre where you must make your fortune and figure in the world, you must resolve to be an actor, and not a *persona muta*, which is just equivalent to a candle-snuffer upon other theatres. Whoever does not shine there is obscure, insignificant, and contemptible ; and you cannot conceive how easy it is, for a man of half your sense and knowledge, to shine there if he pleases. The receipt to make a speaker, and an applauded one too, is short and easy. Take of common sense *quantum sufficit*, add a little application to the rules and orders of the house, throw obvious thoughts in a new light, and make up the whole with a large quantity of purity, correctness, and elegance of style. Take it for granted, that by far the greatest part of mankind do neither analyse nor search to the bottom ; they are incapable of penetrating deeper than the surface. All have senses to be gratified, very few have reason to be applied to. Graceful utterance and action please their eyes, elegant diction tickles their ears ; but strong reason would be thrown away upon them. I am not only persuaded by theory, but convinced by my experience, that (supposing a certain degree of common sense) what is called a good speaker is as much a mechanic as a good shoemaker ; and that the two trades are equally to be learned by the same degree of application. Therefore, for God's sake, let this trade be the principal object of your thoughts ; never lose sight of it.

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Attend minutely to your style, whatever language you speak or write in ; seek for the best words, and think of the best turns. Whenever you doubt of the propriety or elegance of any word, search the dictionary, or some good author, for it, or inquire of somebody who is master of that language ; and in a little time, propriety and elegance of diction will become so habitual to you that they will cost you no more trouble.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 49.*

. . .

When I first came into the House of Commons I respected that assembly as a venerable one, and felt a certain awe upon me : but, upon better acquaintance, that awe soon vanished, and I discovered, that, of the five hundred and sixty, not above thirty could understand reason, and that all the rest were *peuple* ; that those thirty only required plain common sense, dressed up in good language ; and that all the others only required flowing and harmonious periods, whether they conveyed any meaning or not, having ears to hear, but not sense enough to judge. These considerations made me speak with little concern the first time, with less the second, and with none at all the third. I gave myself no farther trouble about anything, except my elocution and my style ; presuming, without much vanity, that I had common sense sufficient not to talk nonsense. Fix these three truths strongly in your mind : first, that it is absolutely necessary for you to speak in Parliament ; secondly, that it only requires a little human attention, and no supernatural gifts ; and, thirdly, that you have all the reason in the world to think that you shall speak well.

*Ib. iv. 55.*

**Parties.**

## Parties.

In all parties and bodies of men there have always been found, and it has been always understood there are, men whose virtue is too weak to stand the first shock either of temptation or danger : when such men give way, they leave a party stronger, because its rottenness is removed.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 157.

## Passionate people.

It is a vulgar notion, and worthy of the vulgar, for it is both false and absurd, that passionate people are the best-natured people in the world. *They are a little hasty, it is true ; a trifle will put them in a fury ; and, while they are in that fury, they neither know nor care what they say or do : but then, as soon as it is over, they are extremely sorry and penitent for any injury or mischief they did.* This panegyric of these choleric good-natured people, when examined and simplified, amounts in plain common sense and English to this : that they are good-natured when they are not ill-natured ; and that when, in their fits of rage, they have said or done things that have brought them to the gaol or the gallows, they are extremely sorry for it. It is, indeed, highly probable that they are ; but where is the reparation to those whose reputations, limbs, or lives, they have either wounded or destroyed ? This concern comes too late, and is only for themselves. Self-love was the cause of the injury, and is the only motive of the repentance.

*Ib.* ii. 306.

## The Passions.

Wherever you would persuade or prevail, address yourself to the passions ; it is by them that mankind is to be taken.

Caesar

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Caesar bade his soldiers, at the battle of Pharsalia, aim at the faces of Pompey's men ; they did so, and prevailed. I bid you strike at the passions ; and if you do, you too will prevail. If you can once engage people's pride, love, pity, ambition (or whichever is their prevailing passion) on your side, you need not fear what their reason can do against you.

*Letters to his Son, i. 226.*

### Patience.

Patience is a most necessary qualification for business<sup>1</sup> ; many a man would rather you heard his story, than granted his request.

*Ib. iv. 299.*

### Pedants.

There is another species of learned men who, though less dogmatical and supercilious, are not less impertinent. These are the communicative and shining pedants who adorn their conversation, even with women, by happy quotations of Greek and Latin, and who have contracted such a familiarity with the Greek and Roman authors, that they call them by certain names or epithets denoting intimacy. As *old* Homer ; that *sly rogue* Horace ; *Maro*, instead of Virgil ; and *Naso*, instead of Ovid. These are often imitated by coxcombs, who have no learning at all ; but who have got some names and some scraps of ancient authors by heart, which they improperly and impertinently retail in all companies, in hopes of passing for scholars. If, therefore, you would avoid the accusation of pedantry, on one hand, or the

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<sup>1</sup> See *ante* p. 14, n. 1.

suspicion of ignorance, on the other, abstain from learned ostentation. Speak the language of the company you are in; speak it purely, and unlarded with any other. Never seem wiser, nor more learned, than the people you are with. Wear your learning, like your watch, in a private pocket; and do not pull it out, and strike it, merely to show that you have one. If you are asked what o'clock it is, tell it; but do not proclaim it hourly and unasked, like the watchman.

*Letters to his Son, i. 322.*

..

I have always observed that the most learned people, that is, those who have read the most Latin, write the worst; and this distinguishes the Latin of a gentleman scholar from that of a pedant. A gentleman has, probably, read no other Latin than that of the Augustan age, and therefore can write no other, whereas the pedant has read much more bad Latin than good, and consequently writes so too. He looks upon the best classical books as books for school-boys, and consequently below him; but pores over fragments of obscure authors, treasures up the obsolete words which he meets with there, and uses them, upon all occasions, to show his reading, at the expense of his judgment. Plautus is his favourite author, not for the sake of the wit and the *vis comica* of his comedies; but upon account of the many obsolete words, and the cant of low characters, which are to be met with nowhere else. He will rather use *olli* than *illi*, *optumè* than *optimè*, and any bad word, rather than any good one, provided he can but prove that, strictly speaking, it is Latin; that is, that it was written by a Roman. By this rule, I might now  
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write to you in the language of Chaucer or Spenser, and assert that I wrote English, because it was English in their days ; but I should be a most affected puppy if I did so, and you would not understand three words of my letter. All these, and such-like affected peculiarities, are the characteristics of learned coxcombs and pedants, and are carefully avoided by all men of sense.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 69.

### Persecution.

I would as soon murder a man for his estate as prosecute him for his religious and speculative errors.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 273.

### Philosophy.

Do not think that all I have said is the consolation only of an old philosophical fellow, almost insensible of pleasure or pain, offered to a young fellow, who has quick sensations of both. No, it is the rational philosophy taught me by experience and knowledge of the world, and which I have practised above thirty years. I always made the best of the best, and never made bad worse by fretting ; this enabled me to go through the various scenes of life, in which I have been an actor, with more pleasure and less pain than most people. You will say, perhaps, one cannot change one's nature ; and that, if a person is born of a very sensible<sup>1</sup> gloomy temper, and apt to see things in the worst light, they

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<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield uses *sensible* where we should say *sensitive*. Johnson says in his *Dictionary* that '*sensible* in low conversation has sometimes the sense of *reasonable, judicious, wise*.'

cannot

cannot help it, nor new-make themselves. I will admit it, to a certain degree, and but to a certain degree ; for though we cannot totally change our nature, we may in a great measure correct it, by reflection and philosophy ; and some philosophy is a very necessary companion in this world, where, even to the most fortunate, the chances are greatly against happiness.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 180.*

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. . .

I belong no more to social life, which, when I quitted busy public life, I flattered myself would be the comfort of my declining days ; but that, it seems, is not given me. I neither murmur nor despair ; the lot of millions of my fellow-creatures is still worse than mine. Exquisite pains of the body, and still greater of the mind, conspire to torture many of them. I thank God I am free from both ; and I look upon the privation of those ills as a real good. A prouder being than I am, a lord, or, if you will, a stately duke, of the whole creation, would place this singly to the account of his reason ; but I am humble enough to allow my constitution its share. I am naturally of a cheerful disposition. I view things in their most comfortable light, and I unavailingly repine at nothing that cannot be retrieved.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 247.*

. . .

My deafness grows gradually worse, which in my mind implies a total one before it be long. In this unhappy situation, which I have reason to suppose will every day grow worse, I still keep up my spirits tolerably ; that is, I  
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am free from melancholy, which I think is all that can be expected. This I impute to that degree of philosophy which I have acquired by long experience of the world. I have enjoyed all its pleasures, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which in truth is very low ; whereas those who have not experienced always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare ; but I have been behind the scenes. It is a common notion, and like many common ones a very false one, that those who have led a life of pleasure and business can never be easy in retirement ; whereas I am persuaded that they are the only people who can, if they have any sense and reflection. They can look back *oculo irretorto* (without an evil eye) upon what they from knowledge despise ; others have always a hankering after what they are not acquainted with. I look upon all that has passed as one of those romantic dreams that opium commonly occasions, and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream.

*Miscellaneous Works, iv. 255.*

### Physical ills.

Physical ills are the taxes laid upon this wretched life ; some are taxed higher and some lower, but all pay something.

*Ib. iv. 271.*

. . .

The taxes that nature lays upon old age are very heavy, and I would rather that death would distraint at once than groan long under the burthen.

*Ib. iv. 368.*

**Pleasant.**

## Pleasing.

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Pleasing in company is the only way of being pleased in it yourself. Sense and knowledge are the first and necessary foundations for pleasing in company ; but they will by no means do alone, and they will never be perfectly welcome, if they are not accompanied with manners and attentions.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 5a.*

. . .

If you will please people, you must please them in their own way ; and, as you cannot make them what they should be, you must take them as they are.

*Ib. ii. 28a.*

. . .

If you would either please in a private company, or persuade in a public assembly, air, looks, gestures, graces, enunciation, proper accents, just emphasis, and tuneful cadences, are full as necessary as the matter itself. Let awkward, ungraceful, inelegant, and dull fellows, say what they will in behalf of their solid matter and strong reasonings, and let them despise all those graces and ornaments which engage the senses and captivate the heart, they will find (though they will possibly wonder why) that their rough unpolished matter, and their unadorned, coarse, but strong arguments, will neither please nor persuade, but, on the contrary, will tire out attention, and excite disgust. We are so made, we love to be pleased, better than to be informed ; information is, in a certain degree, mortifying, as it implies our previous ignorance ; it must be sweetened to be palatable.

*Ib. iii. 124.*

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At nineteen, I left the university of Cambridge, where I was an absolute pedant : when I talked my best, I quoted Horace ; when I aimed at being facetious, I quoted Martial ; and when I had a mind to be a fine gentleman, I talked Ovid. I was convinced that none but the ancients had common sense ; that the classics contained everything that was either necessary, useful, or ornamental to men ; and I was not without thoughts of wearing the *toga virilis* of the Romans, instead of the vulgar and illiberal dress of the moderns. With these excellent notions, I went first to the Hague, where, by the help of several letters of recommendation, I was soon introduced into all the best company, and where I very soon discovered that I was totally mistaken in almost every one notion I had entertained. Fortunately, I had a strong desire to please (the mixed result of good-nature, and a vanity by no means blameable), and was sensible that I had nothing but the desire. I therefore resolved, if possible, to acquire the means too. I studied attentively and minutely the dress, the air, the manner, the address, and the turn of conversation of all those whom I found to be the people in fashion, and most generally allowed to please. I imitated them as well as I could : if I heard that one man was reckoned remarkably genteel, I carefully watched his dress, motions, and attitudes, and formed my own upon them. When I heard of another whose conversation was agreeable and engaging, I listened and attended to the turn of it. I addressed myself, though *de très-mauvaise grace*, to all the most fashionable fine ladies ; confessed, and laughed with them at my own awkwardness and rawness, recommending myself as an object for them to try their skill in forming. By these means, and with a passionate desire  
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of pleasing everybody, I came by degrees to please some ; and, I can assure you, that what little figure I have made in the world has been much more owing to that passionate desire I had of pleasing universally, than to any intrinsic merit or sound knowledge I might ever have been master of.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 216.*

. . .

It is only with women one loves, or men one respects, that the desire of pleasing exerts itself ; and without the desire of pleasing, no man living can please. Let that desire be the spring of all your words and actions. That happy talent, the art of pleasing, which so few do, though almost all might possess, is worth all your learning and knowledge put together. The latter can never raise you high, without the former ; but the former may carry you, as it has carried thousands, a great way, without the latter.

*Ib. iii. 192.*

. . .

Most arts require long study and application ; but the most useful art of all, that of pleasing, requires only the desire.

*Ib. iv. 304.*

. . .

A man who despairs of pleasing will never please ; a man who is sure that he shall always please, wherever he goes, is a coxcomb ; but the man who hopes and endeavours to please, and believes that he may, will most infallibly please.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 186.*

. . .

Perhaps you will say that it is impossible to please everybody. I grant it ; but it does not follow that one should  
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not therefore endeavour to please as many as one can. Nay, I will go farther, and admit that it is impossible for any man not to have some enemies. But this truth from long experience I assert, that he who has the most friends and the fewest enemies is the strongest, will rise the highest with the least envy, and fall, if he does fall, the gentlest and the most pitied.

*Supplement to the Letters to his Son, p. 106.*

...

Could I revert to the age of twenty, and carry back with me all the experience that forty years more have taught me, I can assure you that I would employ much the greatest part of my time in engaging the good will, and in insinuating myself into the predilection of people in general, instead of directing my endeavours to please (as I was too apt to do) the man whom I immediately wanted, exclusively of all others. For if one happens (and it will sometimes happen to the ablest man) to fail in his views with that man, one is at a loss to know who [*sic*] to address oneself to next, having offended in general by that exclusive and distinguished particular application. I would secure a general refuge in the good will of the multitude, which is a great strength to any man; for both ministers and mistresses choose popular and fashionable favourites.

*Ib. p. 112.*

### Pleasures.

Pleasures are, at proper times, necessary and useful: they fashion and form you for the world; they teach you characters, and show you the human heart in its unguarded minutes. But then remember to make that use of them.

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I have known many people, from laziness of mind, go through both pleasure and business with equal inattention ; neither enjoying the one, nor doing the other : thinking themselves men of pleasure because they were mingled with those who were, and men of business because they had business to do, though they did not do it.

*Letters to his Son, i. 316.*

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Enjoy pleasures, but let them be your own, and then you will taste them : but adopt none ; trust to nature for genuine ones. The pleasures that you would feel, you must earn ; the man who gives himself up to all, feels none sensibly. Sardanapalus, I am convinced, never in his life felt any. Those only who join serious occupations with pleasures, feel either as they should do.

*Id. iii. 14.*

Divide your time between useful occupations and elegant pleasures. The morning seems to belong to study, business, or serious conversations with men of learning and figure ; not that I exclude an occasional hour at a *toilette*. From sitting down to dinner, the proper business of the day is pleasure, unless real business, which must never be postponed for pleasure, happens accidentally to interfere. In good company, the pleasures of the table are always carried to a certain point of delicacy and gratification, but never to excess and riot. Plays, operas, balls, suppers, gay conversations in polite and cheerful companies, properly conclude the evenings ; not to mention the tender looks that you may direct, and the sighs that you may offer, upon these several occasions, to some propitious or unpropitious female deity ; whose character and manners will neither disgrace



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disgrace nor corrupt yours. This is the life of a man of real sense and pleasure ; and by this distribution of your time, and choice of your pleasures, you will be equally qualified for the busy, or the *beau monde*.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 15.*

. . .

What a happy period of your life is this ! Pleasure is now, and ought to be, your business. While you were younger, dry rules, and unconnected words, were the unpleasant objects of your labours. When you grow older, the anxiety, the vexations, the disappointments, inseparable from public business, will require the greatest share of your time and attention ; your pleasures may, indeed, conduce to your business, and your business will quicken your pleasures ; but still your time must, at least, be divided : whereas now it is wholly your own, and cannot be so well employed as in the pleasures of a gentleman. The world is now the only book you want, and almost the only one you ought to read : that necessary book can only be read in company, in public places, at meals, and in *ruelles*. You must be in the pleasures, in order to learn the manners of good company. In premeditated, or in formal business, people conceal, or at least endeavour to conceal, their characters ; whereas pleasures discover them, and the heart breaks out through the guard of the understanding. Those are often propitious moments for skilful negotiators to improve. In your destination particularly, the able conduct of pleasures is of infinite use : to keep a good table, and to do the honours of it gracefully, and *sur le ton de la bonne compagnie*, is absolutely necessary for a foreign minister. There is a certain light table chit-chat, useful to

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keep off improper and too serious subjects, which is only to be learned in the pleasures of good company. In truth, it may be trifling; but, trifling as it is, a man of parts, and experience of the world, will give an agreeable turn to it. *L'art de badiner agréablement* is by no means to be despised.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 149.

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### Poets and Pedants.

Let the pedants, whose business it is to believe lies, or the poets, whose trade it is to invent them, match the King of Prussia with a hero, in ancient or modern story, if they can<sup>1</sup>.

*Ib.* iv. 154.

### Politicians.

Patience, to hear frivolous, impertinent, and unreasonable applications, with address enough to refuse, without offending, or, by your manner of granting, to double the obligation: dexterity enough to conceal a truth, without telling a lie: sagacity enough to read other people's countenances: and serenity enough not to let them discover anything by yours; a seeming frankness, with a real reserve, are the rudiments of a politician; the world must be your grammar.

*Ib.* i. 308.

### Politeness.

Whoever keeps good company, and is not polite, must have formed a resolution, and taken some pains not to be

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<sup>1</sup> The news had reached London of Frederick the Great's victory over the Russians at Zorndorf on August 25, 1758. Horace Walpole, writing a day later than Chesterfield, says:—'Well! the king of Prussia is found again—where do you think? only in Poland, up to the chin in Russians. Was ever such a man!'—Walpole's *Letters*, iii. 168.

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so ; otherwise he would naturally and insensibly acquire the air, the address, and the turn of those he converses with.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 309.*

### Practice and Preaching.

Act wisely, upon solid principles, and from true motives, but keep them to yourself, and never talk sententiously.

*Ib. iii. 8.*

. . .

Act contrary to many Churchmen ; practise virtue, but do not preach it whilst you are young.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 393.*

### Praise.

Let me, as an old stager upon the theatre of the world, suggest one consideration to you, which is, to extend your desire of praise a little beyond the strictly praiseworthy, or else you may be apt to discover too much contempt for at least three parts in five of the world, who will never forgive it you. In the mass of mankind, I fear, there is too great a majority of fools and knaves, who, singly from their number, must to a certain degree be respected, though they are by no means respectable. And a man who will show every knave or fool that he thinks him such will engage in a most ruinous war, against numbers much superior to those that he and his allies can bring into the field. Abhor a knave, and pity a fool, in your heart ; but let neither of them, unnecessarily, see that you do so. Some complaisance and attention to fools is prudent, and not mean : as a silent abhorrence of individual knaves is often necessary, and not criminal.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 120.*

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I never knew any man deserve praise, who did not desire it.

Letter to A. C. Stanhope. *Letters to his Godson*, p. 361.

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## Prejudices.

Our prejudices are our mistresses : reason is at best our wife, very often heard indeed, but seldom minded.

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*Letters to his Son*, iii. 290.

## Princes.

The penetration of princes seldom goes deeper than the surface. It is the exterior that always engages their hearts ; and I would never advise you to give yourself much trouble about their understandings. Princes in general (I mean those *porphyrogenets* who are born and bred in purple<sup>1</sup>) are about the pitch of women ; bred up like them, and are to be addressed and gained in the same manner. They always see, they seldom weigh. Your lustre, not your solidity, must take them ; your inside will afterwards support and secure what your outside has acquired.

*ib.* ii. 260.

## Resentment.

Let this be one invariable rule of your conduct, never

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<sup>1</sup> 'In the Greek language *purple* and *porphyry* are the same word ; and as the colours of nature are invariable we may learn that a dark deep red was the Tyrian dye which stained the purple of the ancients. An apartment of the Byzantine palace was lined with porphyry ; it was reserved for the use of the pregnant empresses, and the royal birth of their children was expressed by the appellation of *porphyrogenite*, or born in the purple.'—Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. 1807, ix. 48.

## A respectable Hottentot.

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to show the least symptom of resentment which you cannot, to a certain degree, gratify ; but always to smile, where you cannot strike. There would be no living in Courts, nor indeed in the world, if one could not conceal, and even dissemble, the just causes of resentment which one meets with every day in active and busy life. Whoever cannot master his humour enough, *pour faire bonne mine à mauvais jeu*, should leave the world, and retire to some hermitage in an unfrequented desert. By showing an unavailing and sullen resentment, you authorize the resentment of those who can hurt you, and whom you cannot hurt ; and give them that very pretence, which perhaps they wished for, of breaking with and injuring you ; whereas the contrary behaviour would lay them under the restraints of decency, at least, and either shackle or expose their malice.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 73.*

### A respectable Hottentot.

This epigram in Martial,

*Non amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare,  
Hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te,*

has puzzled a great many people ; who cannot conceive how it is possible not to love anybody, and yet not to know the reason why. I think I conceive Martial's meaning very clearly, though the nature of epigram, which is to be short, would not allow him to explain it more fully ; and I take it to be this,—*O Sabidis, you are a very worthy deserving man ; you have a thousand good qualities, you have a great deal of learning ; I esteem, I respect, but for the soul of me I cannot love you, though I cannot particularly say why. You*  

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*are not aimable; you have not those engaging manners, those pleasing attentions, those graces, and that address, which are absolutely necessary to please, though impossible to define. I cannot say it is this or that particular thing that hinders me from loving you, it is the whole together; and upon the whole you are not agreeable.* How often have I, in the course of my life, found myself in this situation, with regard to many of my acquaintance, whom I have honoured and respected, without being able to love? I did not know why, because, when one is young, one does not take the trouble, nor allow oneself the time, to analyse one's sentiments, and to trace them up to their source. But subsequent observation and reflection have taught me why. There is a man whose moral character, deep learning, and superior parts, I acknowledge, admire, and respect; but whom it is so impossible for me to love, that I am almost in a fever whenever I am in his company. His figure (without being deformed) seems made to disgrace or ridicule the common structure of the human body. His legs and arms are never in the position which, according to the situation of his body, they ought to be in; but constantly employed in committing acts of hostility upon the graces. He throws anywhere but down his throat whatever he means to drink, and only mangles what he means to carve. Inattentive to all the regards of social life, he mistimes or misplaces everything. He disputes with heat, and indiscriminately, mindless of the rank, character, and situation of those with whom he disputes, absolutely ignorant of the several gradations of familiarity or respect; he is exactly the same to his superiors, his equals, and his inferiors, and therefore, by a necessary consequence, absurd to two of the three. Is it possible to  
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love such a man? No. The utmost I can do for him, is to consider him as a respectable Hottentot<sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 128.

### Ridicule.

There is nothing that a young fellow, at his first appearance in the world, has more reason to dread, and, consequently, should take more pains to avoid, than having any ridicule fixed upon him. It degrades him with the most reasonable part of mankind, but it ruins him with the rest; and I have known many a man undone by acquiring a ridiculous nickname: I would not, for all the riches in the world, that you should acquire one when you return to England. Vices and crimes excite hatred and reproach; failings, weaknesses, and awkwardnesses, excite ridicule; they are laid hold of by mimics, who, though very contemptible wretches themselves, often, by their buffoonery, fix ridicule upon their betters. The little defects in manners, elocution, address, and air (and even of figure, though very unjustly) are the objects of ridicule, and the causes of nicknames. You cannot imagine the grief it would give

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<sup>1</sup> In my *Dr. Johnson: His Friends and his Critics*, p. 214, and my edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, i. 267, I have proved that 'the respectable Hottentot' was not Dr. Johnson. He was, I had little doubt, one Mr. L., who is mentioned in two passages in *Chesterfield's Letters* (vol. ii. pp. 219, 262). Mr. L., I conjectured, was Mr. (afterwards Sir George, and subsequently Lord) Lyttelton. On lately referring to Lord Mahon's edition of *Chesterfield's Letters* I was pleased to find this conjecture confirmed. He had seen the originals of three of the four volumes of the *Letters*, and he states that in these two passages L. was Lyttelton. Unfortunately to the originals of one volume he had not access. He seems to be in error when he says that this was the second, for in that volume he corrects many passages. Mahon's edition of *Chesterfield's Letters*, i. 317, 354; v. 465.

me,

me, and the prejudice it would do you, if, by way of distinguishing you from others of your name, you should happen to be called Muttering Stanhope, Absent Stanhope, Ill-bred Stanhope, or Awkward, Left-legged Stanhope: therefore, take great care to put it out of the power of ridicule itself to give you any of these ridiculous epithets; for, if you get one, it will stick to you like the envenomed shirt.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 273.*

. . .

It is commonly said, and more particularly by Lord Shaftesbury, that ridicule is the best test of truth<sup>1</sup>, for that it will not stick where it is not just. I deny it. A truth learned in a certain light, and attacked in certain words, by men of wit and humour, may, and often doth, become ridiculous, at least so far that the truth is only remembered and repeated for the sake of the ridicule. The overturn of Mary of Medicis into a river, where she was half drowned, would never have been remembered if Madame de Verneuil<sup>2</sup>, who saw it, had not said *la Reine boit*.

*Ib. iii. 260.*

## Ridiculous people.

No man whatsoever, be his pretensions what they will, has a natural right to be ridiculous: it is an acquired right, and not to be acquired without some industry, which perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, ed. 1714, pp. 61, 73-4. See Johnson's *Life of Akenside* for a criticism of 'Shaftesbury's foolish assertion.'

<sup>2</sup> Mary of Medicis was the wife, and Madame de Verneuil the mistress, of Henry IV. In the *Mémoires de Sully* (ed. 1788, vi. 226) I find an account of the accident, but not of Madame de Verneuil's saying.



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is the reason why so many people are so jealous and tenacious of it.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 275.

### Rising in the World.

A calm serenity, negative merit and graces, do not become your age. You should be *alerte, adroit, vif*; be wanted, talked of, impatiently expected, and unwillingly parted with in company. I should be glad to hear half a dozen women of fashion say, *Où est donc le petit Stanhope ? Que ne vient-il ? Il faut avouer qu'il est aimable*. All this I do not mean singly with regard to women as the principal object ; but with regard to men, and with a view of your making yourself considerable. For, with very small variations, the same things that please women please men : and a man whose manners are softened and polished by women of fashion, and who is formed by them to an habitual attention and complaisance, will please, engage, and connect men much easier and more than he would otherwise. You must be sensible that you cannot rise in the world, without forming connections, and engaging different characters to conspire in your point. You must make them your dependents, without their knowing it, and dictate to them while you seem to be directed by them. Those necessary connections can never be formed, or preserved, but by an uninterrupted series of complaisance, attentions, politeness, and some constraint. You must engage their hearts, if you would have their support ; you must watch the *mollia tempora*, and captivate them by the *agréments* and charms of conversation. People will not be called out to your service only when you want them ; and, if you expect

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to receive strength from them, they must receive either pleasure or advantage from you.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 255.

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## Ruling passion.

Almost all people are born with all the passions, to a certain degree ; but almost every man has a prevailing one, to which the others are subordinate. Search every one for that ruling passion<sup>1</sup> ; pry into the recesses of his heart, and observe the different workings of the same passion in different people. And, when you have found out the prevailing passion of any man, remember never to trust him where that passion is concerned. Work upon him by it, if you please ; but be upon your guard yourself against it, whatever professions he may make you.

*Ib.* i. 240.

## Rumours of a change of Ministry.

The wild conjectures of volunteer politicians, and the ridiculous importance which, upon these occasions, block-heads always endeavour to give themselves, by grave looks, significant shrugs, and insignificant whispers, are very entertaining to a bystander, as, thank God, I now am. One *knows something*, but is not yet at liberty to tell it ; another has heard something from a very good hand ; a third

<sup>1</sup> 'Search then the ruling passion : there alone  
The wild are constant, and the cunning known ;  
The fool consistent, and the false sincere ;  
Priests, princes, women, no dissemblers here.  
This clew once found unravels all the rest,  
The prospect clears and Wharton stands confess'd.'

Pope, *Moral Essays*, i. 174.

Johnson, in his *Life of Pope*, denies the existence of any such passion.  
—*Works*, ed. 1825, viii. 293.

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congratulates himself upon a certain degree or intimacy which he has long had with every one of the candidates, though perhaps he has never spoken twice to any one of them. In short, in these sort of intervals, vanity, interest, and absurdity, always display themselves in the most ridiculous light. One who has been so long behind the scenes, as I have, is much more diverted with the entertainment than those can be who only see it from the pit and boxes. I know the whole machinery of the interior, and can laugh the better at the silly wonder and wild conjectures of the uninformed spectators.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 64.*

### Scandal.

Neither retail nor receive scandal willingly ; for though the defamation of others may, for the present, gratify the malignity of the pride of our hearts, cool reflection will draw very disadvantageous conclusions from such a disposition : and in the case of scandal, as in that of robbery, the receiver is always thought as bad as the thief.

*ib. ii. 97.*

### Schools of Divinity.

Wild imaginations form systems, which weak minds adopt implicitly, and which sense and reason oppose in vain ; their voice is not strong enough to be heard in schools of divinity.

*ib. iii. 248.*

### Secrets.

Little secrets are commonly told again, but great ones generally kept.

*ib. ii. 63.*

A proper

A proper secrecy is the only mystery of able men ; mystery is the only secrecy of weak and cunning ones. A man who tells nothing, or who tells all, will equally have nothing told him. If a fool knows a secret, he tells it wherever it is his interest to tell it. But women and young men are very apt to tell what secrets they know from the vanity of having been trusted. Trust none of these, whenever you can help it.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 298.*

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There are some occasions in which a man must tell half his secret, in order to conceal the rest : but there is seldom one in which a man should tell it all. Great skill is necessary to know how far to go, and where to stop.

*Ib. iv. 303.*

### Seeing everything.

Seeing everything is the only way not to admire anything too much.

*Ib. i. 310.*

### Seeming ignorance.

A seeming ignorance is very often a most necessary part of worldly knowledge. It is, for instance, commonly advisable to seem ignorant of what people offer to tell you ; and when they say, Have not you heard of such a thing ? to answer, No, and to let them go on, though you know it already. Some have a pleasure in telling it, because they think that they tell it well ; others have a pride in it, as being the sagacious discoverers ; and many have a vanity in showing that they

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they have been, though very undeservedly, trusted ? all these would be disappointed, and consequently displeased, if you said, Yes. Seem always ignorant (unless to one most intimate friend) of all matters of private scandal and defamation, though you should hear them a thousand times, for the parties affected always look upon the receiver to be almost as bad as the thief : and, whenever they become the topic of conversation, seem to be a sceptic, though you are really a serious believer ; and always take the extenuating part. But all this seeming ignorance should be joined to thorough and extensive private informations : and, indeed, it is the best method of procuring them ; for most people have such a vanity in showing a superiority over others, though but for a moment, and in the merest trifles, that they will tell you what they should not, rather than not show that they can tell what you did not know : besides that, such seeming ignorance will make you pass for incurious, and consequently undesigning. However, fish for facts, and take pains to be well informed of everything that passes ; but fish judiciously, and not always, nor indeed often, in the shape of direct questions, which always put people upon their guard, and, often repeated, grow tiresome. But sometimes take the things that you would know for granted, upon which somebody will kindly and officiously set you right : sometimes say, that you have heard so and so ; and at other times seem to know more than you do, in order to know all that you want : but avoid direct questioning as much as you can.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 12.*

### **Self-conversations.**

The present inaction, I believe, gives you leisure enough  
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for *ennui*, but it gives you time enough too for better things ; I mean, reading useful books, and, what is still more useful, conversing with yourself some part of every day. Lord Shaftesbury recommends self-conversation to all authors<sup>1</sup> ; and I would recommend it to all men ; they would be the better for it. Some people have not time, and fewer have inclination, to enter into that conversation ; nay, very many dread it, and fly to the most trifling dissipations, in order to avoid it ; but if a man would allot half an hour every night for this self-conversation, and recapitulate with himself whatever he has done, right or wrong, in the course of the day, he would be both the better and the wiser for it.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 201.*

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## Servants.

Good breeding and a certain *suavitas morum* shines and charms in every situation of life, with relation to all sorts and ranks of people, as well the lowest as the highest. There is a degree of good breeding towards those who are greatly your inferiors, which is, in truth, common humanity and good nature ; and yet I have known some persons, who in other respects were well bred, brutal to their servants and dependants. This is mean, and implies a hardness of heart, and is what I am sure you never will be guilty of. When you use the imperative mood to your servants or dependants, who are your equals by nature (and only your inferiors by the

<sup>1</sup> See Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, ed. 1714, i. 168. He uses the words, 'self-examiner' (ib.) and 'self-inspection' (p. 196), but not, I think, 'self-conversation.'

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malice of their fortune) you will add some softening word, such as *pray do so and so*, or *I wish you would do so*. You cannot conceive how much that *suavity* of manners will endear you to everybody, even to those who have it not themselves.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 253.*

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Whenever you write to persons greatly your inferiors, and by way of giving orders, let your letters speak, what I hope in God you will always feel, the utmost gentleness and humanity. If you happen to write to your *valet de chambre*, or your bailiff, it is no great trouble to say, *Pray, do such a thing*; it will be taken kindly, and your orders will be the better executed for it. What good heart would roughly exert the power and superiority which chance more than merit has given him over many of his fellow-creatures?

*Ib. p. 268.*

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It gave me great pleasure to observe the indignation which you expressed at the brutality of the pacha you lately dined with, to his servant, which I am sure you are and ever will be incapable of. Those pachas seem to think that their servants and themselves are not made of the same clay, but that God has made by much the greatest part of mankind to be the oppressed and abused slaves of the superior ranks. Service is a mutual contract; the master hires and pays his servant, the servant is to do his master's business; but each is equally at liberty to be off of the engagement, upon due warning. Servants are full as necessary to their masters, as their masters are to them, and so in truth is the whole human species to each other.

*Ib. p. 287.*

**Showish**

## Showish people.

Swallow all your learning in the morning, but digest it in company in the evenings. The reading of ten new characters is more your business now than the reading of twenty old books ; showish and shining people always get the better of all others, though ever so solid. If you would be a great man in the world when you are old, shine and be showish in it while you are young : know everybody, and endeavour to please everybody,—I mean exteriorly, for fundamentally it is impossible.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 182.*

. . .

I cannot conclude this letter without returning again to the showish, the ornamental, the shining parts of your character, which, if you neglect, upon my word, you will render the solid ones absolutely useless : nay, such is the present turn of the world, that some valuable qualities are even ridiculous, if not accompanied by the genteeler accomplishments. Plainness, simplicity, and Quakerism, either in dress or manners, will by no means do ; they must both be laced and embroidered : speaking, or writing sense, without elegance and turn, will be very little persuasive ; and the best figure in the world, without air and address, will be very ineffectual. Some pedants may have told you that sound sense and learning stand in need of no ornaments ; and, to support that assertion, elegantly quote the vulgar proverb, that *good wine needs no bush* : but, surely, the little experience you have already had of the world must have convinced you that the contrary of that assertion is true. All those accomplishments are now in your power ; think of them, and of them only.

*Ib. iii. 228.*

**Shyness.**

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### Shyness.

I remember that when with all the awkwardness and rust of Cambridge about me, I was first introduced into good company, I was frightened out of my wits. I was determined to be what I thought civil; I made fine low bows, and placed myself below everybody; but when I was spoken to, or attempted to speak myself, *obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit*<sup>1</sup>. If I saw people whisper, I was sure it was at me; and I thought myself the sole object of either the ridicule or the censure of the whole company, who, God knows, did not trouble their heads about me. In this way I suffered, for some time, like a criminal at the bar; and should certainly have renounced all polite company for ever, if I had not been so convinced of the absolute necessity of forming my manners upon those of the best companies, that I determined to persevere, and suffer anything, or everything, rather than not compass that point. Insensibly it grew easier to me, and I began not to bow so ridiculously low, and to answer questions without great hesitation or stammering: if, now and then, some charitable people, seeing my embarrassment, and being *desœuvré* themselves, came and spoke to me, I considered them as angels sent to comfort me, and that gave me a little courage. I got more soon afterwards, and was intrepid enough to go up to a fine woman and tell her that I thought it a warm day; she answered me, very civilly, that she thought so too; upon which the conversation ceased, on my part, for some time,

<sup>1</sup> *Æneid* ii. 774.

till she, good-naturedly resuming it, spoke to me thus : ' I see your embarrassment, and I am sure that the few words you said to me cost you a great deal ; but do not be discouraged for that reason and avoid good company. We see that you desire to please, and that is the main point ; you want only the manner, and you think that you want it still more than you do. You must go through your noviciate before you can profess good-breeding ; and, if you will be my novice, I will present you to my acquaintance as such.'

*Letters to his Son, ii. 320.*

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### Singularity.

We think a difference of opinion, of conduct, of manners, a tacit reproach, at least, upon our own ; we must therefore use ourselves to a ready conformity to whatever is neither criminal nor dishonourable. Whoever differs from any general custom is supposed both to think and proclaim himself wiser than the rest of the world ; which the rest of the world cannot bear, especially in a young man<sup>1</sup>. A young fellow is always forgiven, and often applauded, when he carries a fashion to an excess ; but never if he stops short of it. The first is ascribed to youth and fire ; but the latter is imputed to an affectation of singularity, or superiority. At your age, one is allowed to *outrer* fashion, dress, vivacity, gallantry, &c., but by no means to be behind hand in any one of them.

*Ib. iv. 23.*

<sup>1</sup> ' Whatever Swift did, he seemed willing to do in a manner peculiar to himself, without sufficiently considering that singularity, as it implies a contempt of the general practice, is a kind of defiance which justly provokes the hostility of ridicule.'—Johnson's *Works*, viii. 223.

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### Sights.

A well-bred man seldom thinks, but never seems to think, himself slighted, undervalued, or laughed at in company, unless where it is so plainly marked out that his honour obliges him to resent it in a proper manner ; *mais les honnêtes gens ne se boudent jamais*. I will admit that it is very difficult to command oneself enough to behave with ease, frankness, and good-breeding towards those who, one knows, dislike, slight, and injure one as far as they can without personal consequences ; but I assert that it is absolutely necessary to do it : you must embrace the man you hate, if you cannot be justified in knocking him down ; for otherwise you avow the injury which you cannot revenge.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 11.*

### Small talk.

There is a sort of chit-chat, or *small-talk*, which is the general run of conversation at Courts, and in most mixed companies. It is a sort of middling conversation, neither silly nor edifying ; but, however, very necessary for you to be master of. It turns upon the public events of Europe, and then is at its best ; very often upon the number, the goodness, or badness, the discipline, or the clothing, of the troops of different princes ; sometimes upon the families, the marriages, the relations of princes, and considerable people ; and, sometimes, *sur la bonne chère*, the magnificence of public entertainments, balls, masquerades, &c. I would wish you to be able to talk upon all these things, better, and with more knowledge than other people ; inso-  
much

much that, upon those occasions, you should be applied to, and that people should say, *I dare say Mr. Stanhope can tell us*. Second-rate knowledge, and middling talents, carry a man farther at Courts, and in the busy part of the world, than superior knowledge and shining parts.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 212.

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There is a fashionable kind of *small talk* that you should get, which, trifling as it is, is of use in mixed companies, and at table, especially in your foreign department, where it keeps off certain serious subjects, that might create disputes, or at least coldness for a time. Upon such occasions it is not amiss to know how to *parler cuisine*, and to be able to dissert upon the growth and flavour of wines. These, it is true, are very little things; but they are little things that occur very often, and therefore should be said *avec gentillesse, et grâce*. I am sure they must fall often in your way; pray take care to catch them. There is a certain language of conversation, a fashionable diction, of which every gentleman ought to be perfectly master, in whatever language he speaks. The French attend to it carefully, and with great reason; and their language, which is a language of phrases, helps them out exceedingly. That delicacy of diction is characteristic of a man of fashion and good company.

*Id.* iii. 355.

### Sorrow.

Wise people may say what they will, but one passion is never cured but by another; grief cannot be talked away,

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but it may and will be insensibly removed by other objects of one's attention <sup>1</sup>.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 142.

. . .

Time and business are the only cure for real sorrow.

*Letters to his Godson*, p. 346.

### Speaking of oneself.

I would allow no man to speak of himself, unless in a Court of Justice, in his own defence, or as a witness. Shall a man speak in his own praise, however justly? No. The hero of his own little tale always puzzles and disgusts the company, who do not know what to say nor how to look. Shall he blame himself? No. Vanity is as much the motive of his self-condemnation as of his own panegyric. I have known many people take shame to themselves, and with a modest contrition confess themselves guilty of most of the cardinal virtues. They have such a weakness in their nature, that they cannot help being too much moved with the misfortunes and miseries of their fellow-creatures, which they feel, perhaps more, but at least as much, as they do their own. Their generosity, they are sensible, is imprudence, for they are apt to carry it too far, from the weak though irresistible beneficence of their nature. They are, possibly, too jealous of their honour, and too irascible whenever they think that it is touched, and this proceeds from their unhappy, warm constitution, which makes them too tender and sensible

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<sup>1</sup> 'The safe and general antidote against sorrow is employment.'—*The Rambler*, No. 47.

upon

upon that point. And so on, of all the virtues possible. A poor trick, and a wretched instance of human vanity, that defeats its own purpose. Do you be sure never to speak of yourself, for yourself, nor against yourself; but let your character speak for you. Whatever that says will be believed, but whatever you say of it will not, and only make you odious or ridiculous<sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 189.*

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## Speaking and pleasing.

Above all things aim at perfection in the two important arts of speaking and pleasing; without them, all your other talents are maimed and crippled. They are the wings upon which you must soar above other people; without them you will only crawl with the dull mass of mankind. Prepossess by your air, address, and manners; persuade by your tongue; and you will easily execute what your head has contrived.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 296.*

## Spirit.

In youth one thinks that everything is to be carried by spirit and vigour; that art is meanness, and that versatility and complaisance are the refuge of pusillanimity and

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<sup>1</sup> 'Dr. Johnson observed: "A man cannot with propriety speak of himself except he relates simple facts, as, 'I was at Richmond;' or what depends on mensuration, as, 'I am six feet high.' He is sure he has been at Richmond; he is sure he is six feet high; but he cannot be sure he is wise, or that he has any other excellence. Then, all censure of a man's self is oblique praise. It is in order to show how much he can spare. It has all the invidiousness of self-praise, and all the reproach of falsehood.'"—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, iii. 323.

weakness.

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weakness. This most mistaken opinion gives an indelicacy, a *brusquerie*, and a roughness, to the manners. Fools, who can never be undeceived, retain them as long as they live : reflection, with a little experience, makes men of sense shake them off soon. When they come to be a little better acquainted with themselves, and with their own species, they discover that plain right reason is, nine times in ten, the fettered and shackled attendant of the triumph of the heart and the passions ; consequently, they address themselves nine times in ten to the conqueror, not to the conquered : and conquerors, you know, must be applied to in the gentlest, the most engaging, and the most insinuating manner. Have you found out that every woman is infallibly to be gained by every sort of flattery, and every man by one sort or other ? Have you discovered what variety of little things affect the heart, and how surely they collectively gain it ? If you have, you have made some progress.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 284.*

..

Young men are as apt to think themselves wise enough, as drunken men are to think themselves sober enough. They look upon spirit to be a much better thing than experience, which they call coldness. They are but half mistaken ; for though spirit, without experience, is dangerous, experience, without spirit, is languid and defective. Their union, which is very rare, is perfection : you may join them, if you please ; for all my experience is at your service, and I do not desire one grain of your spirit in return. Use them both, and let them reciprocally animate and check each other. I mean here, by the spirit of youth, only the vivacity and presumption of youth, which hinder them

them from seeing the difficulties or dangers of an undertaking; but I do not mean what the silly vulgar calls spirit, by which they are captious, jealous of their rank, suspicious of being undervalued, and tart (as they call it) in their repartees, upon the slightest occasions. This is an evil, and a very silly spirit, which should be driven out, and transferred to an herd of swine. This is not the spirit of a man of fashion, who has kept good company.

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*Letters to his Son*, iv. 10.

..

Spirit is now a very fashionable word: to act with spirit, to speak with spirit, means only, to act rashly and to talk indiscreetly. An able man shows his spirit by gentle words and resolute actions: he is neither hot nor timid.

*Ib.* iv. 299.

## Statesmen and Beauties.

Statesmen and beauties are very rarely sensible of the gradations of their decay; and, too sanguinely hoping to shine on in their meridian, often set with contempt and ridicule.

*Ib.* iv. 61.

## Stewards.

Since you are your own steward do not cheat yourself, for I have known many a man lose more by being his own steward than he would have been robbed of by any other. Tenants are always too hard for landlords, especially such landlords as think they understand those matters and do not<sup>1</sup>.

*Miscellaneous Works*, iv. 212.

<sup>1</sup> 'Sir,' said Johnson, 'if a man is not of a sluggish mind he may be his own steward.'—Boswell's *Johnson*, v. 56.

Style.



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### Style.

Style is the dress of thoughts ; and let them be ever so just, if your style is homely, coarse, and vulgar, they will appear to as much disadvantage, and be as ill-received, as your person, though ever so well proportioned, would, if dressed in rags, dirt, and tatters. It is not every understanding that can judge of matter ; but every ear can and does judge, more or less, of style ; and were I either to speak or write to the public, I should prefer moderate matter, adorned with all the beauties and elegances of style, to the strongest matter in the world, ill-worded and ill-delivered.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 265.*

### Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.

Aim at perfection in everything, though in most things it is unattainable ; however, they who aim at it, and persevere, will come much nearer it than those whose laziness and despondency makes them give it up as unattainable. *Magnis tamen excidit ausis*<sup>1</sup> is a degree of praise which will always attend a noble and shining temerity, and a much better sign in a young fellow than *serpere humi, tutus nimium timidusque procellæ*<sup>2</sup>. For men, as well as women,

‘Born to be controlled  
Stoop to the forward and the bold.’

A man who sets out in the world with real timidity and diffidence has not an equal chance in it ; he will be discouraged, put by, or trampled upon. But, to succeed,

<sup>1</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* ii. 328. One of Chesterfield's favourite quotations.

<sup>2</sup> *Serpit humi*, &c.—Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 28.

a man,

a man, especially a young one, should have inward firmness, steadiness, and intrepidity; with exterior modesty, and *seeming* diffidence. He must modestly, but resolutely, assert his own rights and privileges. *Suaviter in modo*, but *fortiter in re*<sup>1</sup>. He should have an apparent frankness and openness, but with inward caution and closeness. All these things will come to you by frequenting and observing good company. And by good company, I mean that sort of company which is called good company by everybody of that place.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 26.

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. . .

I remember that when I came from Cambridge I had acquired, among the pedants of that illiberal seminary, a sauciness of literature, a turn to satire and contempt, and a strong tendency to argumentation and contradiction. But I had been but a very little while in the world before I found that this would by no means do, and I immediately adopted the opposite character: I concealed what learning I had; I applauded often, without approving; and I yielded commonly, without conviction. *Suaviter in modo* was my law and my prophets; and if I pleased (between you and me) it was much more owing to that, than to any superior knowledge or merit of my own.

*Ib.* iii. 130.

. . .

The *suaviter in modo* alone would degenerate and sink into a mean, timid complaisance and passiveness, if not

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<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield nine or ten times in his letters takes for his text the *suaviter in modo* but *fortiter in re*.

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supported and dignified by the *fortiter in re* ; which would also run into impetuosity and brutality if not tempered and softened by the *suaviter in modo* : however, they are seldom united. The warm, choleric man, with strong animal spirits, despises the *suaviter in modo*, and thinks to carry all before him by the *fortiter in re*. He may possibly, by great accident, now and then succeed, when he has only weak and timid people to deal with ; but his general fate will be to shock, offend, be hated, and fail. On the other hand, the cunning, crafty man, thinks to gain all his ends by the *suaviter in modo* only ; *he becomes all things to all men* ; he seems to have no opinion of his own, and servilely adopts the present opinion of the present person ; he insinuates himself only into the esteem of fools, but is soon detected, and surely despised by everybody else. The wise man (who differs as much from the cunning as from the choleric man) alone joins the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 134.

. . .

If you are in authority and have a right to command, your commands delivered *suaviter in modo* will be willingly, cheerfully, and consequently well obeyed ; whereas, if given only *fortiter*, that is, brutally, they will rather, as Tacitus says, be interpreted than executed. For my own part, if I bid my footman bring me a glass of wine in a rough, insulting manner I should expect that in obeying me he would contrive to spill some of it upon me ; and I am sure I should deserve it. A cool, steady resolution should show that where you have a right to command you will be obeyed ; but, at the same time, a gentleness in the manner of enforcing

ing that obedience should make it a cheerful one, and soften, as much as possible, the mortifying consciousness of inferiority. If you are to ask a favour, or even to solicit your due, you must do it *suaviter in modo*, or you will give those who have a mind to refuse you either a pretence to do it, by resenting the manner ; but, on the other hand, you must, by a steady perseverance and decent tenaciousness, show the *fortiter in re*. The right motives are seldom the true ones of men's actions, especially of kings, ministers, and people in high stations, who often give to importunity and fear what they would refuse to justice or to merit. By the *suaviter in modo* engage their hearts, if you can ; at least, prevent the pretence of offence : but take care to show enough of the *fortiter in re* to extort from their love of ease, or their fear, what you might in vain hope for from their justice or good-nature. People in high life are hardened to the wants and distresses of mankind, as surgeons are to their bodily pains ; they see and hear of them all day long, and even of so many simulated ones, that they do not know which are real, and which not. Other sentiments are therefore to be applied to than those of mere justice and humanity ; their favour must be captivated by the *suaviter in modo*, their love of ease disturbed by unwearied importunity, or their fears wrought upon by a decent intimation of implacable, cool resentment : this is the true *fortiter in re*. This precept is the only way I know in the world of being loved without being despised, and feared without being hated. It constitutes the dignity of character which every wise man must endeavour to establish.

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*Letters to his Son*, iii. 135.

Gentleness

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Gentleness of manners with firmness of mind is a short but full description of human perfection on this side of religious and moral duties.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 138.

### Suspiciousness.

People of an ordinary, low education, when they happen to fall into good company, imagine themselves the only object of its attention ; if the company whispers, it is, to be sure, concerning them ; if they laugh, it is at them ; and if anything ambiguous, that by the most forced interpretation can be applied to them, happens to be said, they are convinced that it was meant at them ; upon which they grow out of countenance first, and then angry. This mistake is very well ridiculed in the *Stratagem*<sup>1</sup>, where Scrub says, *I am sure they talked of me, for they laughed consumedly.*

*Ib.* iv. 11.

### Systematical men.

I have this day been tired, jaded, nay tormented, by the company of a most worthy, sensible, and learned man, a near relation of mine, who dined and passed the evening with me. This seems a paradox, but it is a plain truth ; he has no knowledge of the world, no manners, no address ; far from talking without book, as is commonly said of people who talk sillily, he only talks by book, which, in general conversation, is ten times worse. He has formed in his own closet, from books, certain systems of everything,

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<sup>1</sup> 'I believe they talked,' &c.—Farquhar's *Beaux Stratagem*, Act iii. sc. 1.

argues

argues tenaciously upon those principles, and is both surprised and angry at whatever deviates from them. His theories are good, but, unfortunately, are all impracticable. Why? Because he has only read, and not conversed. He is acquainted with books, and an absolute stranger to men. Labouring with his matter, he is delivered of it with pangs; he hesitates, stops in his utterance, and always expresses himself inelegantly. His actions are all ungraceful; so that, with all his merit and knowledge, I would rather converse six hours with the most frivolous tittle-tattle woman, who knew something of the world, than with him. The preposterous notions of a systematical man who does not know the world tire the patience of a man who does. It would be endless to correct his mistakes, nor would he take it kindly; for he has considered everything deliberately, and is very sure that he is in the right. Impropropriety is a characteristic, and a never-failing one, of these people. Regardless, because ignorant, of custom and manners, they violate them every moment. They often shock, though they never mean to offend; never attending either to the general character or the particular distinguishing circumstances of the people to whom, or before whom, they talk: whereas the knowledge of the world teaches one that the very same things which are exceedingly right and proper in one company, time, and place, are exceedingly absurd in others. In short, a man who has great knowledge, from experience and observation, of the characters, customs, and manners of mankind, is a being as different from, and as superior to, a man of mere book and systematical knowledge, as a well-managed horse is to an ass.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 15.*

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**Talk.**

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### Talk.

Remember that the wit, humour, and jokes of most mixed companies are local. They thrive in that particular soil, but will not often bear transplanting. Every company is differently circumstanced, has its particular cant and jargon, which may give occasion to wit and mirth within that circle, but would seem flat and insipid in any other, and therefore will not bear repeating. Nothing makes a man look sillier than a pleasantry not relished or not understood ; and if he meets with a profound silence, when he expected a general applause, or, what is worse, if he is desired to explain the *bon mot*, his awkward and embarrassed situation is easier imagined than described. *A propos* of repeating, take great care never to repeat (I do not mean here the pleasanties) in one company what you hear in another. Things seemingly indifferent may, by circulation, have much graver consequences than you would imagine. Besides, there is a general tacit trust in conversation, by which a man is obliged not to report anything out of it, though he is not immediately enjoined secrecy. A retailer of this kind is sure to draw himself into a thousand scrapes and discussions, and to be shyly and uncomfortably received, wherever he goes.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 95.*

. . .

Frequent *les beaux esprits* and be glad, but not proud, of frequenting them : never boast of it as a proof of your own merit, nor insult, in a manner, other companies, by telling them affectedly what you, Montesquieu, and Fontenelle were talking of the other day, as I have known many people do here with regard to Pope and Swift, who had never  
been

been twice in company with either ; nor carry into other companies the tone of those meetings of *beaux esprits*. Talk literature, taste, philosophy, &c., with them, *à la bonne heure* ; but then with the same ease, and more *enjouement*, talk *pompons*, *moires*, &c., with Madame de Blot, if she requires it. Almost every subject in the world has its proper time and place, in which no one is above or below discussion. The point is, to talk well upon the subject you talk upon ; and the most trifling frivolous subjects will still give a man of parts an opportunity of showing them. *L'usage du grand monde* can alone teach that.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 167.

..

Great attention is to be had to times and seasons : for example, at meals talk often but never long at a time ; for the frivolous bustle of the servants, and often the more frivolous conversation of the guests, which chiefly turns upon kitchen-stuff and cellar-stuff, will not bear any long reasonings or relations. Meals are and were always reckoned the moments of relaxation of the mind, and sacred to easy mirth and social cheerfulness.

*Letters to his Godson*, p. 192.

### Time.

I knew once a very covetous, sordid fellow<sup>1</sup>, who used frequently to say, 'Take care of the pence, for the pounds will take care of themselves.' This was a just and sensible reflection in a miser. I recommend you to take care of minutes, for hours will take care of themselves. I am very

<sup>1</sup> 'Old Mr. Lowndes, the famous Secretary of the Treasury in the reigns of King William, Queen Anne, and King George I.'—*Chesterfield's Letters to his Son*, ii. 334.

sure

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sure that many people lose two or three hours every day by not taking care of the minutes. Never think any portion of time whatsoever too short to be employed ; something or other may always be done in it.

*Letters to his Son, i. 291.*

. . .

Take warning betimes, and enjoy every moment ; pleasures do not commonly last so long as life, and therefore should not be neglected, and the longest life is too short for knowledge ; consequently every moment is precious.

*Id. iii. 317.*

### Titles.

The most absurd character that I know of in the world, and the finest food for satire and ridicule, is a sublime and stately man of quality, who, without one grain of any merit, struts pompously in all the dignity of an ancient descent *from a long restive race of droning kings*<sup>1</sup>, or more probably derived to him from fool to fool. I could name many men of great quality and fortune, who would pass through the world quietly, unknown and unlaughed at, were it not for those accidental advantages upon which they value themselves, and treat their inferiors, as they call them, with arrogance and contempt. But I never knew a man of quality and fortune respected upon those accounts, unless he was humble with his title, and extensively generous and

<sup>1</sup> 'What have I lost by my forefathers' fault?

Why was I not the twentieth by descent

From a long restive race of droning kings?'

*Dryden*, quoted in Johnson's *Dictionary*.

beneficent

beneficent with his fortune. *My Lord* is become a ridiculous nickname for those proud fools; see *My Lord comes; there's My Lord*; that is, in other words, see the *puppy*, there is the *Blockhead*. I am sure you would by all means avoid ridicule, for it sticks longer even than an injury, and to avoid it wear your title as if you had it not; but for your estate, let distress and want, even without merit, feel that you have one.

*Letters to his Godson*, p. 258.

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...

There is not, in my mind, a finer subject for ridicule than a man who is proud of his birth, and jealous of his rank; his civility is an insolent protection, his walk is stately and processional, and he calls his inferiors only *fellows*. I remember a silly Lord of this kind who one day when the house was up, came to the door in Palace Yard, and finding none of his servants there, asked the people who stood at the door, where are my fellows; upon which one of them answered him, your lordship has no fellow in the world. All silly men are not proud, but I aver that all proud men are silly without exception. Vanity is not always pride, but pride is always a foolish ill-grounded vanity<sup>1</sup>.

*Ib.* p. 291.

## Travelling.

Those who travel heedlessly from place to place, observing only their distance from each other, and attending only to

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Adams insisted on Lord Chesterfield's general affability and easiness of access, especially to literary men. 'Sir,' said Johnson, 'that is not Lord Chesterfield; he is the proudest man this day existing.' 'No,' said Dr. Adams, 'there is one person, at least, as proud; I think by your own account you are the prouder man of the two.' 'But mine,' replied Johnson, 'was defensive pride.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, i. 265.

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their accommodation at the inn at night, set out fools, and will certainly return so. Those who only mind the raree-shows of the places which they go through, such as steeples, clocks, town-houses, &c., get so little by their travels that they might as well stay at home. But those who observe, and inquire into the situations, the strength, the weakness, the trade, the manufactures, the government, and constitution of every place they go to ; who frequent the best companies, and attend to their several manners and characters ; those alone travel with advantage : and as they set out wise, return wiser<sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Son, i. 287.*

### Trifles.

Great merit, or great failings, will make you respected or despised ; but trifles, little attentions, mere nothings, either done or neglected, will make you either liked or disliked in the general run of the world. Examine yourself, why you like such and such people, and dislike such and such others ; and you will find that those different sentiments proceed from very slight causes. Moral virtues are the foundation of society in general, and of friendship in particular ; but attentions, manners, and graces both adorn and strengthen them.

*Id. ii. 184.*

. . .

Observe and you will find, almost universally, that the

<sup>1</sup> 'Dr. Johnson said: As the Spanish proverb says, "He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him." So it is in travelling ; a man must carry knowledge with him, if he would bring home knowledge.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, iii. 302.

least

least things either please or displease most ; because they necessarily imply, either a very strong desire of obliging, or an unpardonable indifference about it.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 321.*

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### Use.

I have known many people patronised, pushed up, and preferred by those who could have given no other reason for it than that they were used to them.

*Id. iii. 351.*

### Vanity.

Vanity, though not the best motive, is perhaps the surest principle of the best human actions. It certainly makes people desirous to shine, and to please in the world. La Bruyère, in his Characters, says, '*On ne vaut dans ce monde que ce que l'on veut bien valoir*<sup>1</sup>'; and it is very true : for a man had better overvalue than undervalue himself. Mankind in general will take his own word for his own merit. The only difficulty is to be enough of a coxcomb, and not too much.

Letter to A. C. Stanhope. *Letters to his Godson, p. 339.*

### Versatility.

A versatility of manners is as necessary in social as a versatility of parts is in political life. One must often yield, in order to prevail ; one must humble oneself, to be exalted ;

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of Chesterfield's favourite quotations. He makes it at least six times in the three series of letters.

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one must, like St. Paul, become all things to all men, to gain some<sup>1</sup>; and (by the way) men are taken by the same means, *mutatis mutandis*, that women are gained—by gentleness, insinuation, and submission; and these lines of Mr. Dryden's will hold to a minister as well as to a mistress:

'The prostrate lover, when he lowest lies,  
But stoops to conquer, and but kneels to rise'<sup>2</sup>

In the course of the world, the qualifications of the cameleon are often necessary; nay, they must be carried a little farther, and exerted a little sooner; for you should, to a certain degree, take the hue of either the man or the woman that you want, and wish to be upon terms with.

*Letters to his Son*, iii. 131.

..

Whenever any private person of fashion invites you to pass a few days at his country-house accept of the invitation. This will necessarily give you a versatility of mind, and a facility to adopt various manners and customs; for everybody desires to please those in whose house they are, and people are only to be pleased in their own way. Nothing is more engaging than a cheerful and easy conformity to people's particular manners, habits, and even weaknesses;

<sup>1</sup> 'I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.'—1 *Corinthians* ix. 22.

<sup>2</sup> 'Th' offending lover, when he lowest lies,  
Submits to conquer, and but kneels to rise.'

Dryden, *Amphitryon*, Act iii.

Goldsmith's comedy no doubt took its name from this line. As it was acted the year before *Chesterfield's Letters* were published, it would seem to show that the version '*stoops to conquer*' was the one generally known.

nothing

nothing (to use a vulgar expression) should come amiss to a young fellow. He should be, for good purposes, what Alcibiades was commonly for bad ones, a Proteus, assuming with ease, and wearing with cheerfulness, any shape. Heat, cold, luxury, abstinence, gravity, gaiety, ceremony, easiness, learning, trifling, business, and pleasure, are modes which he should be able to take, lay aside, or change occasionally, with as much ease as he would take or lay aside his hat. All this is only to be acquired by use and knowledge of the world, by keeping a great deal of company, analysing every character, and insinuating yourself into the familiarity of various acquaintance. A right, a generous ambition to make a figure in the world, necessarily gives the desire of pleasing ; the desire of pleasing points out, to a great degree, the means of doing it ; and the art of pleasing is, in truth, the art of rising, of distinguishing oneself, of making a figure and a fortune in the world.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 17.*

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### Vices.

I will hope, and believe, that you will have no vices ; but if, unfortunately, you should have any, at least I beg of you to be content with your own, and to adopt no other body's. The adoption of vice has, I am convinced, ruined ten times more young men, than natural inclinations.

*Id. ii. 83.*

...

If people had no vices but their own, few would have so many as they have. For my own part, I would sooner wear other people's clothes than their vices, and they would sit upon me just as well. I hope you will have none ; but, if ever you have, I beg, at least, they may be all your own.

Vices

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Vices of adoption are, of all others, the most disgraceful and unpardonable.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 162.*

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People easily pardon, in young men, the common irregularities of the senses ; but they do not forgive the least vice of the heart. The heart never grows better by age ; I fear rather worse, always harder<sup>1</sup>. A young liar will be an old one ; and a young knave will only be a greater knave as he grows older. But should a bad young heart, accompanied with a good head (which, by the way, very seldom is the case), really reform in a more advanced age from a consciousness of its folly as well as of its guilt, such a conversion would only be thought prudential and political, but never sincere.

*Ib. iii. 18.*

### Vivacity.

Your great vivacity, which I hear of from many people, will be no hindrance to your pleasing in good company ; on the contrary, will be of use to you, if tempered by good-breeding, and accompanied by the graces. But then, I suppose your vivacity to be a vivacity of parts, and not a constitutional restlessness ; for the most disagreeable composition that I know in the world is that of strong animal spirits, with a cold genius. Such a fellow is troublesomely active, frivolously busy, foolishly lively ; talks much, with little meaning, and laughs more, with less reason : whereas, in my opinion, a warm and lively genius, with a cool constitution, is the perfection of human nature.

*Ib. ii. 125.*

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<sup>1</sup> 'I believe men may be generally observed to grow less tender as they advance in age.'—*The Rambler*, No. 78.

**Vocations.**

## Vocations.

It is very certain that no man is fit for everything ; but it is almost as certain, too, that there is scarce any one man who is not fit for something, which something nature plainly points out to him by giving him a tendency and propensity to it. I look upon common sense to be to the mind what conscience is to the heart, the faithful and constant monitor of what is right or wrong. And I am convinced that no man commits either a crime or a folly but against the manifest and sensible representations of the one or the other. Every man finds in himself, either from nature or education, for they are hard to distinguish, a peculiar bent and disposition to some particular character ; and his struggling against it is the fruitless and endless labour of Sisypheus. Let him follow and cultivate that vocation, he will succeed in it, and be considerable in one way at least ; whereas, if he departs from it, he will at best be inconsiderable, probably ridiculous. Mankind, in general, have not the indulgence and good-nature to save a whole city for the sake of five righteous, but are more inclined to condemn many righteous for the sake of a few guilty. And a man may easily sink many virtues by the weight of one folly, but will hardly be able to protect many follies by the force of one virtue.

*Miscellaneous Works, ii. 91.*

## Volto sciolto e pensieri stretti.

Take care never to seem dark and mysterious, which is not only a very unamiable character, but a very suspicious one too : if you seem mysterious with others, they will be really so with you, and you will know nothing. The height  
of

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of abilities is, to have *volto sciolto* and *pensieri stretti*<sup>1</sup>; that is, a frank, open, and ingenuous exterior, with a prudent and reserved interior: to be upon your own guard, and yet, by a seeming natural openness, to put people off of theirs. Depend upon it, nine in ten of every company you are in will avail themselves of every indiscreet and unguarded expression of yours, if they can turn it to their own advantage. A prudent reserve is therefore as necessary as a seeming openness is prudent. Always look people in the face when you speak to them; the not doing it is thought to imply conscious guilt; besides that, you lose the advantage of observing by their countenances what impression your discourse makes upon them. In order to know people's real sentiments, I trust much more to my eyes than to my ears; for they can say whatever they have a mind I should hear, but they can seldom help looking what they have no intention that I should know.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 90.*

### Vulgar men.

A vulgar man is captious and jealous; eager and impetuous about trifles. He suspects himself to be slighted; thinks everything that is said meant at him; if the company happens to laugh, he is persuaded they laugh at him; he grows angry and testy, says something very impertinent, and draws himself into a scrape by showing what he calls a proper spirit and asserting himself. A man of fashion does not suppose himself to be either the sole or principal object of the thoughts, looks, or words of the company; and never suspects that he is either slighted or laughed at, unless he

<sup>1</sup> This is one of Chesterfield's favourite maxims.

is conscious that he deserves it. And if (which very seldom happens) the company is absurd or ill-bred enough to do either, he does not care two pence, unless the insult be so gross and plain as to require satisfaction of another kind. As he is above trifles, he is never vehement and eager about them ; and, wherever they are concerned, rather acquiesces than wrangles. A vulgar man's conversation always favours strongly of the lowness of his education and company. It turns chiefly upon his domestic affairs, his servants, the excellent order he keeps in his own family, and the little anecdotes of the neighbourhood ; all which he relates with emphasis as interesting matters. He is a man gossip.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 224.*

. . .

A new-raised man is distinguished in a regiment by his awkwardness ; but he must be impenetrably dull if, in a month or two's time, he cannot perform at least the common manual exercise, and look like a soldier. The very accoutrements of a man of fashion are grievous incumbrances to a vulgar man. He is at a loss what to do with his hat when it is not upon his head ; his cane (if unfortunately he wears one) is at perpetual war with every cup of tea or coffee he drinks ; destroys them first, and then accompanies them in their fall. His sword is formidable only to his own legs, which would possibly carry him fast enough out of the way of any sword but his own. His clothes fit him so ill, and constrain him so much, that he seems rather their prisoner than their proprietor. He presents himself in company like a criminal in a court of justice ; his very air condemns him ; and people of fashion will no more connect themselves

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with the one than people of character will with the other. This repulse drives and sinks him into low company; a gulf from whence no man, after a certain age, ever emerged.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 226.*

### **The weak side of men.**

Young people are very apt to overrate both men and things from not being enough acquainted with them. In proportion as you come to know them better you will value them less. You will find that reason, which always ought to direct mankind, seldom does; but that passions and weaknesses commonly usurp its seat, and rule in its stead. You will find that the ablest have their weak sides too, and are only comparatively able, with regard to the still weaker herd: having fewer weaknesses themselves, they are able to avail themselves of the innumerable ones of the generality of mankind: being more masters of themselves, they become more easily masters of others. They address themselves to their weaknesses, their senses, their passions; never to their reason; and consequently seldom fail of success.

*Ib. iv. 53.*

### **When to do nothing.**

When a man of sense happens to be in that disagreeable situation in which he is obliged to ask himself more than once, *What shall I do?* he will answer himself, Nothing.

*Ib. iv. 299.*

### **Wise looks.**

A young fellow ought to be wiser than he should seem to be; and an old fellow ought to seem wise whether he really be so or not.

*Ib. iii. 329.*

**Wit.**

Wit.

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A wit is a very unpopular denomination, as it carries terror along with it ; and people in general are as much afraid of a live wit, in company, as a woman is of a gun, which she thinks may go off of itself, and do her a mischief.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 81.*

. . .

Ready wit may create many admirers, but, take my word for it, it makes few friends. It shines and dazzles like the noon-day sun, but, like that too, is very apt to scorch, and therefore is always feared. The milder morning and evening light and heat of that planet soothe and calm our minds. Good sense, complaisance, gentleness of manners, attentions, and graces, are the only things that truly engage and durably keep the heart at long run. Never seek for wit ; if it presents itself, well and good ; but even in that case let your judgment interpose, and take care that it be not at the expense of anybody.

*Id. iii. 337.*

. . .

If God gives you wit, which I am not sure that I wish you, unless he gives you at the same time an equal portion at least of judgment to keep it in good order, wear it like your sword in the scabbard, and do not brandish it to the terror of the whole company. If you have real wit it will flow spontaneously, and you need not aim at it, for in that case the rule of the Gospel is reversed, and it will prove, seek and you shall *not* find. Wit is so shining a quality that everybody admires it, most people aim at it, all people fear it, and few love it, unless in themselves. A man must have a good share of wit himself to endure a great share of it in  
another

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another. When wit exerts itself in satire it is a most malignant distemper ; wit, it is true, may be shown in satire, but satire does not constitute wit, as most fools imagine it does. A man of real wit will find a thousand better occasions of showing it. Abstain therefore most carefully from satire, which, though it fall upon no particular person in company, and momentarily, from the malignity of the human heart, pleases all, upon reflection it frightens all too ; they think it may be their turn next, and will hate you for what they find you could say of them more than be obliged to you for what you do not say. Fear and hatred are next door neighbours. The more wit you have the more good-nature and politeness you must show, to induce people to pardon your superiority, for that is no easy matter. Learn to shrink yourself to the size of the company you are in ; take their tone, whatever it may be, and excel in it if you can ; but never pretend to give the tone : a free conversation will no more bear a dictator than a free government will <sup>1</sup>.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 180.*

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A wise man will live at least as much within his wit as within his income.

*Ib. p. 181.*

• •

The injustice of a bad man is sooner forgiven than the insult of a witty one. The former only hurts one's liberty or property, but the latter hurts and mortifies that secret pride which no human breast is free from.

*Ib. p. 182.*

• •

Wit, my Lords, is a sort of property : it is the property of those who have it, and too often the only property they have

<sup>1</sup> See *ante* p. 22.

to depend on. It is indeed but a precarious dependence. Thank God ! we, my Lords, have a dependence of another kind <sup>1</sup>.

*Miscellaneous Works*, ii. 336.

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## Withered Beauties.

Canidia, withered by age, and shattered by infirmities, totters under the load of her misplaced ornaments, and her dress varies according to the freshest advices from Paris, instead of conforming itself, as it ought, to the directions of her undertaker. Her mind, as weak as her body, is absurdly adorned : she talks politics and metaphysics, mangles the terms of each, and, if there be sense in either, most infallibly puzzles it ; adding intricacy to politics, and darkness to mysteries, equally ridiculous in this world and the next.

*Id.* ii. 97.

## Women.

Women have great influence as to a man's fashionable character, and an awkward man will never have their votes ; which, by the way, are very numerous, and much oftener counted than weighed.

*Letters to his Son*, ii. 17.

...

As women are a considerable, or at least a pretty numerous part of company ; and as their suffrages go a great way towards establishing a man's character in the fashionable part of the world (which is of great importance to the fortune and figure he proposes to make in it) it is necessary to please them. I will therefore, upon this subject, let you into

<sup>1</sup> From Chesterfield's speech against the Act for Licensing Plays, June 2, 1737. See Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, i. 140.

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certain *Arcana* that will be very useful for you to know, but which you must, with the utmost care, conceal, and never seem to know. Women, then, are only children of a larger growth<sup>1</sup>; they have an entertaining tattle, and sometimes wit; but for solid, reasoning good sense, I never in my life knew one that had it, or who reasoned or acted consequentially for four-and-twenty hours together. Some little passion or humour always breaks in upon their best resolutions. Their beauty neglected or controverted, their age increased, or their supposed understandings depreciated, instantly kindles their little passions, and overturns any system of consequential conduct, that in their most reasonable moments they might have been capable of forming. A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them, humours and flatters them, as he does with a sprightly, forward child; but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters, though he often makes them believe he does both; which is the thing in the world that they are proud of, for they love mightily to be dabbling in business (which, by the way, they always spoil); and being justly distrustful that men in general look upon them in a trifling light, they almost adore that man, who talks more seriously to them, and who seems to consult and trust them: I say, who seems; for weak men really do, but wise ones only seem to do it. No flattery is either too high or too low for them. They will greedily swallow the highest, and gratefully accept of the lowest; and you may safely flatter any woman, from her understanding, down to the exquisite

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<sup>1</sup> 'Men are but children of a larger growth.'—Dryden, *All for Love*, iv. 1.

taste of her fan. Women who are either indisputably beautiful, or indisputably ugly, are best flattered upon the score of their understandings : but those who are in a state of mediocrity are best flattered upon their beauty, or at least their graces ; for every woman who is not absolutely ugly thinks herself handsome, but not hearing often that she is so, is the more grateful and the more obliged to the few who tell her so : whereas a decided and conscious beauty looks upon every tribute paid to her beauty only as her due, but wants to shine and to be considered on the side of her understanding : and a woman who is ugly enough to know that she is so, knows that she has nothing left for it but her understanding, which is, consequently (and probably in more senses than one) her weak side. But these are secrets, which you must keep inviolably, if you would not, like Orpheus, be torn to pieces by the whole sex. On the contrary, a man who thinks of living in the great world must be gallant, polite, and attentive to please the women. They have, from the weakness of men, more or less influence in all Courts : they absolutely stamp every man's character in the *beau monde*, and make it either current, or cry it down, and stop it in payments. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to manage, please, and flatter them, and never to discover the least marks of contempt, which is what they never forgive ; but in this they are not singular, for it is the same with men, who will much sooner forgive an injustice than an insult.

*Letters to his Son, ii. 55.*

. . .

Women are not so much taken by beauty as men are, but prefer those men who show them the most attention.

*Ib. ii. 330.*

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Women are never either good or bad by halves ; their passions are too strong, and their reason too weak, to do anything with moderation.

*Letters to his Son, iv. 225.*

. . .

In company every woman is every man's superior, and must be addressed with respect, nay more with flattery, and you need not fear making it too strong. Such flattery is not mean on your part, nor pernicious to them, for it can never give them a greater opinion of their beauty or their sense than they had before. Therefore make the dose strong ; it will be greedily swallowed. Women stamp the fashionable or unfashionable character of all young men at their first appearance in the world ; bribe them, then, with minute attentions, good breeding and flattery, to make them give their vote and interest in your favour. I have often known their proclamation give a value and currency to base coin enough, and consequently will add a lustre to the truest sterling. Women, though otherwise called sensible, have all of them, more or less, weaknesses, singularities, whims and humours, especially vanity ; study attentively all these failings, gratify them as far as you can, nay flatter them, and sacrifice your own little humours to them. Young men are too apt to show a dislike, not to say an aversion and contempt for ugly and old women, which is both unpolite and injudicious, for there is a respectful civility due to the whole sex ; besides, the ugly and the old talk the most, having the least to do themselves, are jealous of being despised, and never forgive it.

*Letters to his Godson, p. 176.*

. . .

Civility is particularly due to all women ; and remember  
that

that no provocation whatsoever can justify any man in not being civil to every woman ; and the greatest man in England would justly be reckoned a brute if he were not civil to the meanest woman. It is due to their sex, and is the only protection they have against the superior strength of ours ; nay, even a little flattery is allowable with women ; and a man may without any meanness tell a woman that she is either handsomer or wiser than she is.

*Supplement to the Letters to his Son, p. 78.*

. . .

Ugly women, who may more properly be called a third sex than a part of the fair one, should publicly renounce all thoughts of their persons and turn their minds another way ; they should endeavour to be honest, good-humoured gentlemen ; they may amuse themselves with field-sports, and a cheerful glass, and, if they could get into Parliament, I should, for my own part, have no objection to it. Should I be asked how a woman shall know she is ugly, and take her measures accordingly, I answer, that in order to judge right, she must not believe her eyes, but her ears ; and, if they have not heard very warm addresses and applications, she may depend upon it, it was the deformity, and not the severity of her countenance, that prevented them.

*Miscellaneous Works, ii. 48.*

### The World.

The world is a country which nobody ever yet knew by description ; one must travel through it oneself to be acquainted with it. The scholar, who in the dust of his closet talks or writes of the world, knows no more of it than that orator did of war who judiciously endeavoured to

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instruct Hannibal in it. Courts and camps are the only places to learn the world in. There alone all kinds of characters resort, and human nature is seen in all the various shapes and modes which education, custom, and habit give it : whereas, in all other places, one local mode generally prevails, and produces a seeming, though not a real, sameness of character. For example, one general mode distinguishes an university, another a trading town, a third a sea-port town, and so on ; whereas at a capital, where the prince or the supreme power resides, some of all these various modes are to be seen, and seen in action too, exerting their utmost skill in pursuit of their several objects. Human nature is the same all over the world ; but its operations are so varied by education and habit that one must see it in all its dresses in order to be intimately acquainted with it. The passion of ambition, for instance, is the same in a courtier, a soldier, or an ecclesiastic ; but from their different educations and habits they will take very different methods to gratify it. Civility, which is a disposition to accommodate and oblige others, is essentially the same in every country ; but good-breeding, as it is called, which is the manner of exerting that disposition, is different in almost every country, and merely local ; and every man of sense imitates and conforms to that local good-breeding of the place which he is at.

*Letters to his Son, i. 275.*

. . .

Let every other book give way to this great and necessary book, the world ; of which there are so many various readings, that it requires a great deal of time and attention to understand it well. Contrary to all other books, you must

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not stay at home, but go abroad to read it ; and, when you seek it abroad, you will not find it in booksellers' shops and stalls, but in courts, in *hôtels*<sup>1</sup> at entertainments, balls, assemblies, spectacles, &c. Put yourself upon the foot of an easy, domestic, but polite familiarity and intimacy, in the several French houses to which you have been introduced. Cultivate them, frequent them, and show a desire of becoming *enfant de la maison*. Get acquainted as much as you can with *les gens de cour* : and observe, carefully, how politely they can differ, and how civilly they can hate ; how easy and idle they can seem in the multiplicity of their business ; and how they can lay hold of the proper moments to carry it on, in the midst of their pleasures. Courts, alone, teach versatility and politeness, for there is no living there without them.

*Letters to his Son, iii. 150.*

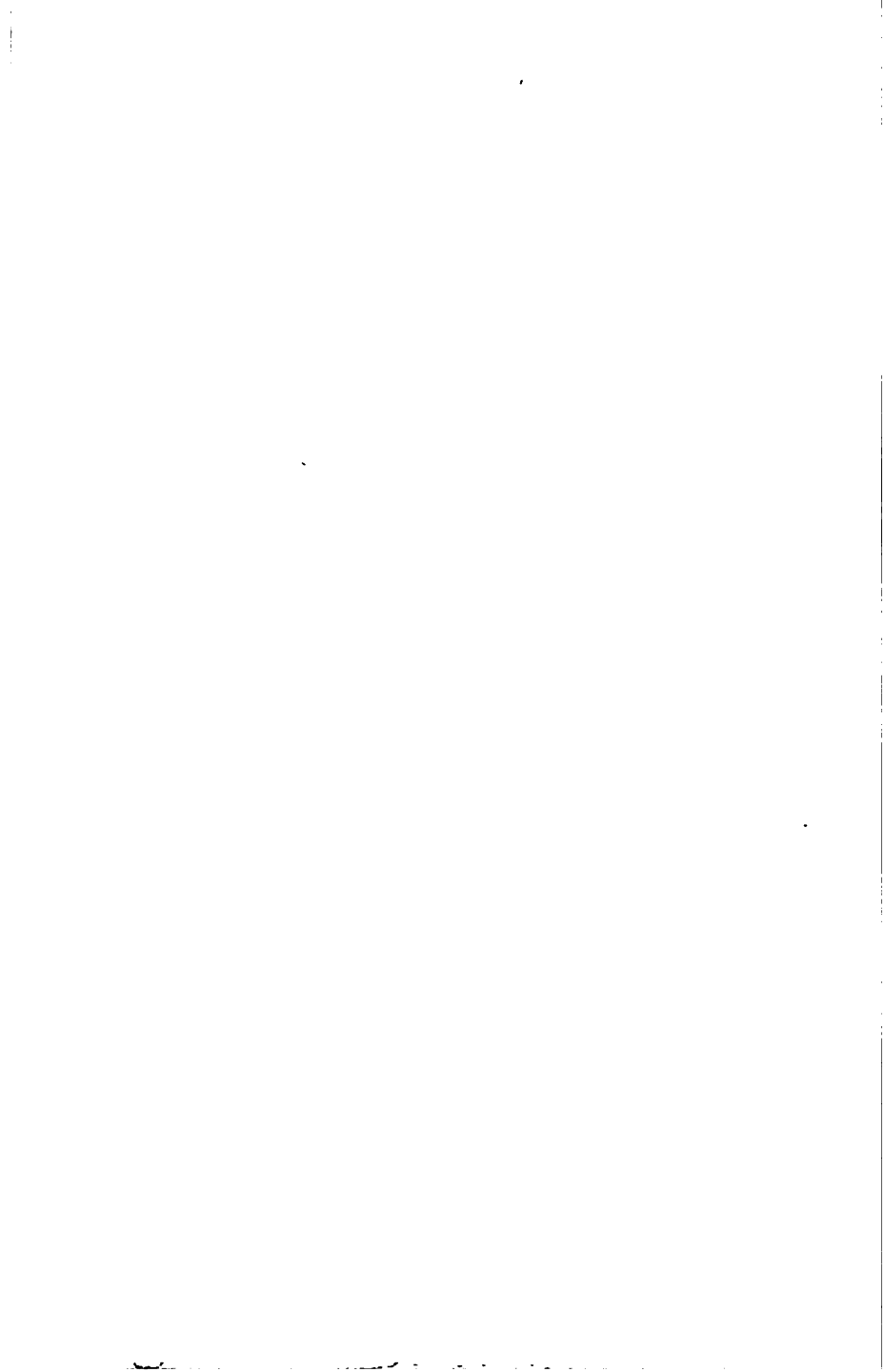
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<sup>1</sup> *Hôtel* is no doubt used by Chesterfield in the sense in which it is defined by Littré, as *demeure somptueuse d'une personne éminente ou riche*.



*CHARACTERS*  
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# CHARACTERS

## BY LORD CHESTERFIELD<sup>1</sup>.



### George the First.

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George the First was an honest, dull, German gentleman, as unfit as unwilling to act the part of a king, which is to shine and to oppress. Lazy and inactive even in his pleasures, which were therefore lowly sensual. He was coolly intrepid, and indolently benevolent. He was diffident of his own parts, which made him speak little in public, and prefer in his social, which were his favourite, hours the company of wags and buffoons. Even his mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, with whom he passed

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<sup>1</sup> First published in the Appendix to the fourth volume of the Earl of Chesterfield's *Works*.

One morning in 1737 Lord Hervey told George II that 'he knew three people that were now writing the History of his Majesty's Reign. "You mean," said the King, "Lords Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, and Carteret." "I do," replied Lord Hervey. "They will all three," said the King, "have about as much truth in them as the *Mille et Une Nuits*. Not but I shall like to read Bolingbroke's, who of all those rascals and knaves that have been lying against me these ten years has certainly the best parts and the most knowledge : he is a scoundrel, but he is a scoundrel of a higher class than Chesterfield. Chesterfield is a little tea-table scoundrel, that tells little womanish lies to make quarrels in families; and

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most of his time, and who had all influence over him, was very little above an idiot<sup>1</sup>.

Importunity alone could make him act, and then only to get rid of it. His views and affections were singly confined to the narrow compass of his Electorate: England was too big for him. If he had nothing great as a king, he had nothing bad as a man; and if he does not adorn, at least he will not stain, the annals of this country. In private life he would have been loved and esteemed as a good citizen, a good friend, and a good neighbour. Happy were it for Europe, happy for the world, if there were not greater kings in it<sup>2</sup>.

### George the Second.

He had not better parts than his father, but much stronger animal spirits, which made him produce and communicate

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tries to make women lose their reputations, and make their husbands beat them, without any object but to give himself airs; as if anybody could believe a woman could like a dwarf-baboon." The Queen said all these three Histories would be three heaps of lies, but lies of very different kinds; she said Bolingbroke's would be great lies, Chesterfield's little lies, and Carteret's lies of both sorts.' The editor points out that of the three *Memoirs* we have nothing but these few Characters.—Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*, ii. 359.

<sup>1</sup> It was commonly believed that she was the mother by George I of Chesterfield's wife. Horace Walpole wrote on May 12, 1743:—"The Duchess of Kendal is dead—eighty-five years old; she was a year older than her late king. Her riches were immense; but I believe my Lord Chesterfield will get nothing by her death—but his wife." Walpole's *Letters*, i. 245; vii. 141. See *ib.* i. ciii. for her belief that the soul of her departed monarch had appeared in the shape of a large raven.

<sup>2</sup> 'George I,' said Dr. Johnson, 'knew nothing, and desired to know nothing; did nothing, and desired to do nothing.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 342.

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himself more. Everything in his composition was little ; and he had all the weaknesses of a little mind, without any of the virtues, or even the vices, of a great one. He loved to act the king, but mistook the part ; and the royal dignity shrunk into the electoral pride. He was educated upon that scale, and never enlarged its dimensions with his dominions. As Elector of Hanover he thought himself great ; as King of Great Britain only rich. Avarice, the meanest of all passions, was his ruling one ; and I never knew him deviate into any generous action.

His first natural movements were always on the side of justice and truth ; but they were often warped by ministerial influence, or the secret twitches of avarice. He was generally reckoned ill-natured, which indeed he was not. He had rather an unfeeling than a bad heart<sup>1</sup> ; but I never observed any settled malevolence in him, though his sudden passions, which were frequent, made him say things which, in cooler moments, he would not have executed. His heart always seemed to me to be in a state of perfect neutrality between hardness and tenderness. In council he was excessively timorous, and thought by many to be so in person ; but of this I can say nothing on my own knowledge.

In his dress and in his conversation he affected the hero so much, that from thence only many called his courage in

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson described him as ‘ upon all occasions unrelenting and barbarous.’—Boswell’s *Johnson*, i. 147. Horace Walpole, however, says that towards convicts under sentence of death ‘ his disposition in general was merciful, if the offence was not murder.’—*Memoirs of the Reign of George II*, i. 175.

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question<sup>1</sup>: though, by the way, that is no certain rule to judge by, since the bravest men, with weak understandings, constantly fall into that error. Little things, as he has often told me himself, affected him more than great ones; and this was so true, that I have often seen him put so much out of humour at his private levee, by a mistake or blunder of a *valet de chambre*, that the gaping crowd admitted to his public levee have, from his looks and silence, concluded that he had just received some dreadful news. Tacitus would always have been deceived by him.

Within certain bounds, but they were indeed narrow ones, his understanding was clear, and his conception quick: and I have generally observed, that he pronounced sensibly and justly upon single propositions; but to analyse, separate, combine, and reduce to a point, complicated ones, was above his faculties.

He was thought to have a great opinion of his own abilities; but, on the contrary, I am very sure that he had a great distrust of them in matters of State. He well knew that he was governed by the Queen, while she lived; and that she was governed by Sir Robert Walpole: but he kept that secret inviolably, and flattered himself that nobody had discovered it<sup>2</sup>. After their deaths, he was governed succes-

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Carlyle, writing of the battle of Dettingen, where the King commanded, says:—‘The English have one fine quality, and Britannic George, like all his Welf race from Henry the Lion down to these days, has it in an eminent degree: they are not easily put into flurry, into fear.’—*History of Friedrich II*, ed. 1862, iii. 674.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Though his affection and confidence in the Queen were implicit, he lived in dread of being supposed to be governed by her; and that silly parade was extended even to the most private moments of business with  
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sively by different ministers, according as they could engage for a sufficient strength in the House of Commons ; for, as avarice was his ruling passion, he feared, hated, and courted, that money-giving part of the legislature.

He was by no means formed for the pleasures of private and social life, though sometimes he tried to supple himself to them ; but he did it so ungracefully, that both he and the company were mutual restraints upon each other, and consequently soon grew weary of one another. A king must be as great in mind as in rank, who can let himself down with ease to the social level, and no lower <sup>1</sup>.

He had no favourites, and indeed no friends, having none of that expansion of heart, none of those amiable connecting talents, which are necessary for both. This, together with the sterility of his conversation, made him prefer the company of women, with whom he rather sauntered away than enjoyed his leisure hours. He was addicted to women, but chiefly to such as required little attention and less pay. He

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my father. Whenever he entered, the Queen rose, courtesied, and retired, or offered to retire. Sometimes the King condescended to bid her stay—on both occasions she and Sir Robert had previously settled the business to be discussed.’—Walpole’s *Letters*, i. cxxx.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Richard II,’ writes Hume, ‘forgot his rank by admitting all men to his familiarity ; and he was not sensible that their acquaintance with the qualities of his mind was not able to impress them with the respect which he neglected to preserve from his birth and station.’—*History of England*, ed. 1773, iii. 27. ‘Great kings,’ said Johnson, ‘have always been social.’—Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*, i. 442. Thomson has described those

‘Kings that the narrow joyless circle scorn.’—*Liberty*, v. 576.

‘On ne peut pas être toujours roi ;’ writes Voltaire ; ‘on serait trop à plaindre.’—*Éloge Funèbre de Louis XV.*

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never had but two avowed mistresses of rank, the Countesses of Suffolk<sup>1</sup> and Yarmouth<sup>2</sup>. The former, though he passed half his time with her, had no degree of influence, and but a small one of profit; the latter, being taken after the death of the Queen, had more of both, but no extravagant share of either.

He was very well-bred; but it was in a stiff and formal manner, and produced in others that restraint which they saw he was under himself. He bestowed his favours so coldly and ungraciously, that they excited no warm returns in those who received them. They knew that they owed them to the ministerial arrangements for the time being, and not to his voluntary choice. He was extremely regular and methodical in his hours, in his papers, and above all in his private accounts; and would be very peevish if any accident, or negligence in his ministers, broke in upon that regular allotment of his time.

He had a very small degree of acquired knowledge: he sometimes read history, and, as he had a very good memory, was exceedingly correct in facts and dates. He spoke French and Italian well, and English very properly, but with something of a foreign accent<sup>3</sup>. He had a contempt

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Howard, Countess of Suffolk, who was present at Jeanie Deans's interview with the Queen as told in *The Heart of Midlothian*.

<sup>2</sup> 'Amelia Sophia, wife of the Baron de Walmoden, created Countess of Yarmouth in 1739. She had much weight with the King; but never employed her credit but to assist his ministers, or to convert some honours and favours to her own advantage.'—Walpole's *Letters*, i. cxxxiv. See *ante*, Introduction, p. xxxi.

<sup>3</sup> 'The King, with a bluff Westphalian accent, spoke English correctly.'—Walpole's *Letters*, i. cxxx.

for

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for the *belles lettres*, which he called trifling<sup>1</sup>. He troubled himself little about religion, but jogged on quietly in that in which he had been bred, without scruples, doubts, zeal, or inquiry<sup>2</sup>. He was extremely sober and temperate, which, together with constant gentle exercise, prolonged his life beyond what his natural constitution, which was but a weak one, seemed to promise. He died of an apoplexy, after a reign of three and thirty years<sup>3</sup>. He died unlamented, though not unpraised because he was dead.

Upon the whole, he was rather a weak than a bad man or king. His government was mild as to prerogative, but burthensome as to taxes, which he raised when and to what degree he pleased, by corrupting the honesty, and not by invading the privileges, of Parliament. I have dwelt the longer upon this character, because I was so long and so well acquainted with it; for above thirty years I was always near his person, and had constant opportunities of observing

<sup>1</sup> 'In truth, I believe King George would have preferred a guinea to a composition as perfect as *Alexander's Feast*.'—Walpole's *Reign of George II*, iii. 304. Pope, in his *Imitations of Horace*, 2 Epis. i. 404, addressing him, says:—

'But verse, alas! your majesty disdains.'

<sup>2</sup> 'George II, no more addicted than his father to too much religious credulity, had yet implicit faith in the German notion of vampires, and has more than once been angry with my father for speaking irreverently of those imaginary blood-suckers.'—Walpole's *Letters*, i. ciii.

<sup>3</sup> Horace Walpole, writing three days after the King's death, says:—'The body has been opened; the great ventricle of the heart had burst. What an enviable death! In the greatest period of the glory of this country and of his reign, in perfect tranquillity at home, at seventy-seven, growing blind and deaf, to die without a pang, before any reverse of fortune, or any distasteful peace, nay, but two days before a ship-load of bad news: could he have chosen such another moment?'—Walpole's *Letters*, iii. 354.

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him, both in his regal robes and in his undress. I have accompanied him in his pleasures, and been employed in his business. I have, by turns, been as well and as ill with him as any man in England. Impartial and unprejudiced, I have drawn this character from the life, and after a forty years' sitting.

### Queen Caroline.

Queen Caroline had lively, pretty parts, a quick conception, and some degree of female knowledge; and would have been an agreeable woman in social, if she had not aimed at being a great one in public life. She had the graces that adorn the former, but neither the strength of parts nor the judgment necessary for the latter. She professed art, instead of concealing it, and valued herself upon her skill in simulation and dissimulation, by which she made herself many enemies, and not one friend, even among the women the nearest to her person.

She loved money, but could occasionally part with it, especially to men of learning, whose patronage she affected. She often conversed with them, and bewildered herself in their metaphysical disputes, which neither she nor they themselves understood. Cunning and perfidy were the means she made use of in business, as all women do, for want of better. She showed her art the most in her management of the King, whom she governed absolutely, by a seeming complaisance and obedience to all his humours; she even favoured and promoted his gallantries<sup>1</sup>. She had

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<sup>1</sup> 'The King always made the Queen the confidante of his amours; which made Mrs. Selwyn once tell him, he should be the last man with  
a dangerous

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a dangerous ambition ; for it was attended with courage, and, if she had lived much longer, might have proved fatal either to herself or the Constitution.

After puzzling herself in all the whimsies and fantastical speculations of different sects, she fixed herself ultimately in deism, believing a future state. She died with great resolution and intrepidity, of a very painful distemper, and under some cruel operations.

Upon the whole, the *agreeable woman* was liked by most people ; but the *Queen* was neither esteemed, beloved, nor trusted by anybody but the King<sup>1</sup>.

### Lord Townshend<sup>2</sup>.

Lord Townshend, by very long experience and unwearied application, was certainly an able man of business, which

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whom she would have an intrigue, for she knew he would tell the Queen.<sup>3</sup>  
—Walpole's *Letters*, i. cxxxiv.

<sup>1</sup> ' Her understanding was uncommonly strong ; and so was her resolution. From their earliest connection she had determined to govern the King, and deserved to do so. . . . She wished to be a patroness of learned men. . . . Her generosity would have displayed itself, for she valued money but as the instrument of her good purposes ; but the King stinted her alike in almost all her passions. . . . Her learning was superficial. Her chief study was divinity, and she had rather weakened her faith than enlightened it. . . . At her death, when Archbishop Potter was to administer the sacrament to her, she declined taking it. When he retired, the courtiers in the ante-room crowded round him, crying, " My Lord, has the Queen received ? " His Grace artfully eluded the question, only saying most devoutly, " Her Majesty was in a heavenly disposition. " . . . Her greatest error was too high an opinion of her own address and art ; she imagined that all who did not dare to contradict her were imposed upon. '—*Id.* i. cxxix-cxxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Charles, second Viscount Townshend. Died 1738. He married for his second wife a sister of Sir Robert Walpole.

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was his only passion. His parts were neither above nor below it; they were rather slow, a defect of the safer side. He required time to form his opinion; but when formed, he adhered to it with invincible firmness, not to say obstinacy, whether right or wrong, and was impatient of contradiction.

He was a most ungraceful and confused speaker in the House of Lords, inelegant in his language, perplexed in his arguments, but always near the stress of the question<sup>1</sup>.

His manners were coarse, rustic, and seemingly brutal, but his nature was by no means so; for he was a kind husband to both his wives, a most indulgent father to all his children, and a benevolent master to his servants; sure tests of real good-nature; for no man can long together simulate or dissimulate at home.

He was a warm friend and a warm enemy; defects, if defects they are, inseparable in human nature, and often accompanying the most generous minds<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 'Lord Townshend always spoke materially, with argument and knowledge, but never pleased. Why? His diction was not only inelegant, but frequently ungrammatical, always vulgar; his cadences false, his voice unharmonious, and his action ungraceful. Nobody heard him with patience, and the young fellows used to joke upon him and repeat his inaccuracies.'—Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, ii. 280.

<sup>2</sup> 'No man was ever a greater slave to his passions than Lord Townshend; few had ever less judgment to poise his passions; none ever listened less to that little they had. He was rash in his undertakings, violent in his proceedings, haughty in his carriage, brutal in his expressions, and cruel in his disposition; impatient of the least contradiction, and as slow to pardon as he was quick to resent. . . . He was much more tenacious of his opinion than of his word; for the one he never gave up, and the other he seldom kept. . . . It was as difficult to make him just as to make him reasonable, and as hard to obtain anything of him as to convince him.'—Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*, i. 108.

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Never minister had cleaner hands than he had. Mere domestic economy was his only care as to money, for he did not add one acre to his estate, and left his younger children very moderately provided for, though he had been in considerable and lucrative employments near thirty years.

As he only loved power for the sake of power, in order to preserve it he was obliged to have a most unwarrantable complaisance for the interests and even dictates of the Electorate, which was the only way by which a British minister could hold either favour or power during the reigns of King George the First and Second.

The coarseness and imperiousness of his manners made him disagreeable to Queen Caroline.

Lord Townshend was not of a temper to act a second part, after having acted a first, as he did during the reign of King George the First. He resolved therefore to make one convulsive struggle to revive his expiring power, or, if that did not succeed, to retire from business. He tried the experiment upon the King, with whom he had a personal interest. The experiment failed, as he might easily, and ought to, have foreseen<sup>1</sup>. He retired to his seat in the country, and in a few years died of an apoplexy.

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert Walpole gave the following explanation of the disunion between him and his brother-in-law :—‘It is difficult to trace the causes of a dispute between statesmen, but I will give you the history in a few words ; as long as the firm of the house was Townshend and Walpole the utmost harmony prevailed ; but it no sooner became Walpole and Townshend than things went wrong, and a separation ensued.’—Coxe’s *Memoirs of Walpole*, ed. 1798, i. 339. Townshend tried to drive from office his brother Secretary of State, the Duke of Newcastle, and give

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Having thus mentioned the slight defects, as well as the many valuable parts, of his character, I must declare that I owed the former to truth, and the latter to gratitude and friendship as well as to truth; since, for some years before he retired from business, we lived in the strictest intimacy that the difference of our age and situations could admit, during which time he gave me many unasked and unequivocal proofs of his friendship.

### Mr. Pope<sup>1</sup>.

Pope in conversation was below himself; he was seldom easy and natural, and seemed afraid that the man should degrade the poet, which made him always attempt wit and humour, often unsuccessfully, and too often unseasonably<sup>2</sup>. I have been with him a week at a time at his house at Twickenham, where I necessarily saw his mind in its undress, when he was both an agreeable and instructive companion<sup>3</sup>.

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the place to Lord Chesterfield, at that time Ambassador at the Hague. Chesterfield came over to London. 'Walpole took him aside, and told him: "I find you are come to be Secretary of State." "Not I," said his Lordship, "I have as yet no pretensions, and wish for a place of more ease. But I claim the Garter; . . . I am a man of pleasure, and the blue ribband would add two inches to my size." "Then I see how it is," replied Sir Robert; "it is Townshend's intrigue, in which you have no share; but it will be fruitless; you cannot be Secretary of State; nor shall you be beholden for the gratification of your wishes to anybody but myself."—*Ib.* p. 336, and Chesterfield's *Works*, i. 112.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Pope. Born 1688, died 1744.

<sup>2</sup> 'In familiar or convivial conversation it does not appear that Pope excelled.'—Johnson's *Works*, viii. 311.

<sup>3</sup> A letter of Chesterfield to the Earl of Marchmont, dated Sept. 8, 1742, speaks of his intention 'to take up Pope at Twickenham and carry him to the Duchess of Marlborough's at Windsor.'—*Marchmont Papers*, ii. 281. I have not found any other account of his visiting Pope.

His

His moral character has been warmly attacked, and but weakly defended; the natural consequence of his shining turn to satire, of which many felt, and all feared, the smart. It must be owned, that he was the most irritable of all the *genus irritabile vatum*<sup>1</sup>, offended with trifles, and never forgetting or forgiving them; but in this I really think that the poet was more in fault than the man. He was as great an instance as any he quotes of the contrarieties and inconsistencies of human nature; for, notwithstanding the malignancy of his satires, and some blameable passages of his life, he was charitable to his power, active in doing good offices, and piously attentive to an old bed-ridden mother, who died but a little time before him<sup>2</sup>. His poor, crazy, deformed body was a mere Pandora's box, containing all the physical ills that ever afflicted humanity<sup>3</sup>. This, perhaps, whetted the edge of his satire, and may in some degree excuse it.

I will say nothing of his works; they speak sufficiently for themselves; they will live as long as letters and taste

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Lord Somerville told Boswell 'that he had dined in company with Pope, and that after dinner the *little man*, as he called him, drank his bottle of Burgundy, and was exceedingly gay and entertaining.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, iv. 50.

<sup>1</sup> Horace, 2 *Epistles* ii. 102, 'the fretful tribe of poets.'

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, speaking of Pope's parents, says:—'The filial piety of Pope was in the highest degree amiable and exemplary. . . . Whatever was his pride, to them he was obedient; and whatever was his irritability, to them he was gentle. Life has among its soothing and quiet comforts few things better to give than such a son.'—Johnson's *Works*, viii. 281.

<sup>3</sup> 'The muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife,  
To help me thro' this long disease, my life,  
To second, Arbuthnot, thy art and care,  
And teach the being you preserv'd to bear.'

Pope's *Prologue to the Satires*, l. 131.

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shall remain in this country, and be more and more admired, as envy and resentment shall subside. But I will venture this piece of classical blasphemy, which is, that, however he may be supposed to be obliged to Horace, Horace is more obliged to him <sup>1</sup>.

He was a deist believing in a future state: this he has often owned himself to me; but when he died he sacrificed a cock to Æsculapius, and suffered the priests who got about him to perform all their absurd ceremonies upon his body <sup>2</sup>.

Having mentioned his being a deist, I cannot forbear relating a singular anecdote, not quite foreign from the purpose. I went to him one morning at Twickenham, and found a large folio Bible, with gilt clasps, lying before him upon his table; and, as I knew his way of thinking upon that book, I asked him jocosely, If he was going to write an answer to it? 'It is a present,' said he, 'or rather a legacy, from my old friend the Bishop of Rochester' <sup>3</sup>. I went to

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<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield wrote to one of his friends:—'J'ose même dire, à la face de tous les pédans de l'univers, que les épîtres et les satires de Pope ont tout le bon sens et toute la justesse, avec mille fois plus d'esprit, que celles d'Horace.'—*Works*, iii. 389.

<sup>2</sup> 'Pope expressed undoubting confidence of a future state. Being asked by his friend, Mr. Hooke, a Papist, whether he would not die like his father and mother, and whether a priest should not be called, he answered, "I do not think it essential, but it will be very right; and I thank you for putting me in mind of it."—Johnson's *Works*, viii. 305. In this he reminded Chesterfield of Socrates, who, just before he passed into a state of insensibility, said:—'Krito, we owe a cock to Æsculapius; discharge the debt, and by no means omit it.'

<sup>3</sup> Francis Atterbury, Pope's 'mitred Rochester,' who in 1722 was sent to the Tower on a charge of treasonable correspondence with the Pretender.

take

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take my leave of him yesterday in the Tower, where I saw this Bible upon his table. After the first compliments, the Bishop said to me, "My friend Pope, considering your infirmities, and my age and exile, it is not likely we should ever meet again, and therefore I give you this legacy to remember me by. Take it home with you, and let me advise you to abide by it."—"Does your lordship abide by it yourself?"—"I do."—"If you do, my lord, it is but lately. May I beg to know what new lights or arguments have prevailed with you now, to entertain an opinion so contrary to that which you entertained of that book all the former part of your life?" The Bishop replied, "We have not time to talk of these things; but take home the book; I will abide by it, and I recommend to you to do so too; and so God bless you!"

Was this hypocrisy; was it the effect of illness, mis-

<sup>1</sup> The editor of Atterbury's *Correspondence* (ii. 81) points out that on July 27, 1722, before the Bishop was sent to the Tower, Pope wrote to him:—"I can only thank you, my Lord, for the kind transition you make from common business to that which is the only real business of every reasonable creature. . . . I ought first to prepare my mind by a better knowledge even of good prophane writers, especially the Moralists, &c., before I can be worthy of tasting that supreme of books and sublime of all writings."—*Ib.* i. 115. See also Pope's Letter to Blount, of June 27, 1723, Pope's *Works*, ed. by Elwin and Courthope, vi. 382.

To what advantage Atterbury 'had tasted that supreme of books' is shown by Macaulay:—"At parting he presented Pope with a Bible, and said, with a disingenuousness of which no man who had studied the Bible to much purpose would have been guilty, "If ever you learn that I have any dealings with the Pretender, I give you leave to say my punishment is just."—Macaulay's *Miscellaneous Writings*, ed. 1871, p. 351. Pope, in the *Epilogue to the Satires*, ii. 82, 'has commemorated in imperishable verse'—

'How pleasing Atterbury's softer hour!

How shin'd the soul, unconquer'd in the Tow'r!'

fortunes,

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fortunes, and disappointed views ; or was it late, very late, conviction ? I will not take upon me even to conjecture. The mind of man is so variable, so different from itself in prosperity and adversity, in sickness and in health, in high or in low spirits, that I take the effects as I find them, without presuming to trace them up to their true and secret causes<sup>1</sup>. I know, by not knowing even myself, how little I know of that good, that bad, that knowing, that ignorant, that reasoning, and unreasonable, creature, *Man*.

### Lord Bolingbroke<sup>2</sup>.

It is impossible to find lights and shades strong enough to paint the character of Lord Bolingbroke, who was a most mortifying instance of the violence of human passions, and of the improved and exalted human reason<sup>3</sup>. His virtues and his vices, his reason and his passions, did not blend themselves by a gradation of tints, but formed a shining and sudden contrast.

Here the darkest, there the most splendid, colours ; and both rendered more striking from their proximity. Impetuosity, excess, and almost extravagancy, characterised not only his passions but even his senses. His youth was

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, after speculating on the causes of Dryden's conversion, ends by saying :—' But inquiries into the heart are not for man ; we must now leave him to his Judge.'—Johnson's *Works*, vii. 279.

<sup>2</sup> Henry St. John, first Viscount Bolingbroke. Born 1678, died 1751. Much of this character was written in Bolingbroke's lifetime, and included in one of Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, vol. ii. p. 289. See also *ib.* iii. 102, 113, 147, 264 ; iv. 43.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Letters*, ii. 290, this line runs as follows :—' and of the weakness of the most exalted human reason.'

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distinguished by all the tumult and storm of pleasures, in which he licentiously triumphed, disdaining all decorum . . . his convivial joys were pushed to all the extravagancy of frantic bacchanals<sup>1</sup>. These passions were never interrupted but by a stronger—ambition. The former impaired both his constitution and his character; but the latter destroyed both his fortune and his reputation.

He engaged young, and distinguished himself, in business. His penetration was almost intuition, and he adorned whatever subject he either spoke or wrote upon by the most splendid eloquence; not a studied or laboured eloquence, but by such a flowing happiness of diction, which (from care perhaps at first) was become so habitual to him, that even his most familiar conversations, if taken down in writing, would have borne the press, without the least correction, either as to method or style<sup>2</sup>. He had noble and generous sentiments, rather than fixed, reflected principles of good-nature and friendship; but they were

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<sup>1</sup> 'I have spoke to an old man,' writes Goldsmith, 'who assured me that he saw him and another of his companions run naked through the Park in a fit of intoxication.'—Bolingbroke's *Works*, ed. 1809, vol. i. *Life*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> The same was said of Atterbury and Johnson. Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 95, n. 2. Chesterfield wrote to his son:—'I would upon my word much rather that you had Lord Bolingbroke's style and eloquence in speaking and writing than all the learning of the Academy of Sciences, the Royal Society, and the two Universities united.'—*Letters*, iii. 147.

To Chesterfield in his admiration might be applied the words which Mr. Carlyle applies to Voltaire: 'Even Bolingbroke's high-lackered brass is gold to this young French friend of his.'—*History of Friedrich II*, ed. 1858, ii. 588. Horace Walpole, in 1780, speaks of 'the falsely boasted abilities of Bolingbroke, which now appear as moderate as his character was in every light detestable.'—*Letters*, vii. 310.

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more violent than lasting, and suddenly and often varied to their opposite extremes, with regard even to the same persons. He received the common attentions of civility as obligations, which he returned with interest; and resented with passion the little inadvertencies of human nature, which he repaid with interest too. Even a difference of opinion upon a philosophical subject would provoke, and prove him no practical philosopher at least<sup>1</sup>.

Notwithstanding the dissipation of his youth, and the tumultuous agitation of his middle age, he had an infinite fund of various and almost universal knowledge, which from the clearest and quickest conception, and the happiest memory that ever man was blest with, he always carried about him. It was his pocket-money, and he never had occasion to draw upon a book for any sum<sup>2</sup>. He excelled more particularly in history, as his historical works plainly prove. The relative political and commercial interests of every country in Europe, particularly of his own, were better known to him than perhaps to any man in it; but how steadily he pursued the latter in his public conduct, his enemies of all parties and denominations tell with pleasure.

During his long exile in France, he applied himself to study with his characteristic ardour; and there he formed, and chiefly executed, the plan of his great philosophical

<sup>1</sup> He was Pope's 'guide, philosopher, and friend.'—*Essay on Man*, iv. 390.

<sup>2</sup> In my edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 256, n. 3, I have given other ways in which this thought has been expressed by different writers.

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work<sup>1</sup>. The common bounds of human knowledge were too narrow for his warm and aspiring imagination ; he must go *extra flammantia moenia mundi*<sup>2</sup>, and explore the unknown and unknowable regions of metaphysics, which open an unbounded field for the excursions of an ardent imagination, where endless conjectures supply the defect of unattainable knowledge, and too often usurp both its name and its influence<sup>3</sup>.

He had a very handsome person, with a most engaging address in his air and manners ; he had all the dignity and good-breeding which a man of quality should or can have, and which so few, in this country at least, really have<sup>4</sup>.

He professed himself a deist, believing in a general Providence, but doubting of, though by no means rejecting

<sup>1</sup> He left this work in his will to David Mallet to publish, which provoked Johnson's rough saying :—' Sir, he was a scoundrel, and a coward : a scoundrel, for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality ; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half a crown to a beggarly Scotchman, to draw the trigger after his death ! '—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, i. 268. In another passage Johnson accuses him of ' contemptible arrogance and impious licentiousness. '—*Works*, vi. 47.

<sup>2</sup> ' Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra

Processit longe flammantia moenia mundi. '—*Lucretius*, i. 72.

<sup>3</sup> ' Toute la métaphysique, à mon gré, contient deux choses : la première, tout ce que les hommes de bon sens savent ; la seconde, ce qu'ils ne sauront jamais. '—*Œuvres de Voltaire*, éd. 1819-25, lix. 76.

<sup>4</sup> Swift thus described him in 1711 :—' I think Mr. St. John the greatest young man I ever knew, wit, capacity, beauty, quickness of apprehension, good learning, and an excellent taste ; the best orator in the House of Commons, admirable conversation, good-nature, and good-manners ; generous, and a despiser of money. '—*Journal to Stella*, Nov. 3, 1711.

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(as is commonly supposed) the immortality of the soul, and a future state.

He died of a cruel and shocking distemper, a cancer in his face, which he endured with firmness<sup>1</sup>. A week before he died, I took my last leave of him with grief; and he returned me his last farewell with tenderness, and said, 'God, who placed me here, will do what he pleases with me hereafter; and he knows best what to do. May he bless you!'

Upon the whole of this extraordinary character, what can we say, but, alas! poor human nature!

### Mr. Pulteney<sup>2</sup>.

Mr. Pulteney was formed by nature for social and convivial pleasures. Resentment made him engage in business. He had thought himself slighted by Sir Robert Walpole, to whom he publicly avowed not only revenge, but utter destruction<sup>3</sup>. He had lively and shining parts, a surprising quickness of wit, and a happy turn to the most amusing and entertaining kinds of poetry, as epigrams, ballads, odes, &c.; in all which he had an uncommon

<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole wrote on Dec. 12, 1751:—'Lord Bolingbroke is dead, or dying of a cancer, which was thought cured by a quack plaster; but it is not everybody can be cured at seventy-five, like my monstrous uncle.'—*Letters*, ii. 274. He died three days later.

<sup>2</sup> William Pulteney, first Earl of Bath. Born 1682, died 1764. This character was written in 1763.

<sup>3</sup> 'He became,' writes Macaulay, 'the greatest leader of Opposition that the House of Commons had ever seen.'—Macaulay's *Essays*, ed. 1874, ii. 152. It took him sixteen years to pull down Walpole.

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facility. His compositions in that way were sometimes satirical, often licentious, but always full of wit<sup>1</sup>.

He had a quick and clear conception of business, could equally detect and practise sophistry<sup>2</sup>. He could state and explain the most intricate matters, even in figures, with the utmost perspicuity. His parts were rather above business; and the warmth of his imagination, joined to the impetuosity and restlessness of his temper, made him incapable of conducting it long together with prudence and steadiness<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Campbell quotes the following stanza from his ballad on the failure of the Attorney-General, Sir Philip Yorke (afterwards Lord Hardwicke), in a prosecution for libel.

‘For Sir Philip well knows,  
That his inuendoes  
Will serve him no longer  
In verse or in prose;  
For twelve honest men have decided the cause,  
Who are judges alike of the facts and the laws.’

*Lives of the Chancellors*, ed. 1846, v. 25.

Wit was not always on Pulteney’s side, as the following lines on him show:—

‘Leave a blank here and there in each page  
To enrol the fair deeds of his youth!  
When you mention the acts of his age,  
Leave a blank for his honour and truth.’

From *The Statesman*, H. C. Williams’s *Odes*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> In a ballad written in 1742 ‘that weather-cock Pulteney’ is thus described:—

‘And to cheat such a man demands all my arts,  
For though he’s a fool, he’s a fool with great parts.’

Walpole’s *Letters*, i. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Chesterfield wrote to Lyttelton on Nov. 15, 1737:—‘It would be endless to give you an account of the various sallies and extravagancies of Pulteney, which change oftener than the wind; his main attention is to pick up a few guineas at whisk; he despises me too much to talk to me about business, unless when some new-born freak breaks out of him involuntarily. But the only judgment I can form of him is that he will get

He

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He was a most complete orator and debater in the House of Commons; eloquent, entertaining, persuasive, strong, and pathetic, as occasion required; for he had arguments, wit, and tears, at his command. His breast was the seat of all those passions which degrade our nature, and disturb our reason. There they raged in perpetual conflict; but avarice, the meanest of them all, generally triumphed, ruled absolutely, and in many instances, which I forbear to mention, most scandalously<sup>1</sup>.

His sudden passion was outrageous, but supported by great personal courage. Nothing exceeded his ambition but his avarice: they often accompany, and are frequently and reciprocally the causes and the effects of each other; but the latter is always a clog upon the former. He affected good-nature and compassion, and perhaps his heart might feel the misfortunes and distresses of his fellow-creatures, but his hand was seldom or never stretched out to relieve them<sup>2</sup>. Though he was an able

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as much power and as much money as soon as he can and upon any terms.'—Chesterfield's *Works*, ed. by Lord Mahon, v. 430.

<sup>1</sup> 'June 5, 1763. Lord Bath's extravagant avarice and unfeelingness on his son's [his only son] death rather increases. Lord Pulteney left a kind of will, saying he had nothing to give, but made it his request to his father to give his post-chaise and one hundred pounds to his cousin Colman [the play-writer]; the same sum and his pictures to another cousin. Lord Bath sent them word they might get their hundred pounds as they could, and for the chaise and pictures they might buy them if they pleased, for they would be sold for his son's debts.'—Walpole's *Letters*, iv. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield, writing to his son on July 20, 1764, after saying that the Earl of Bath had left more than a million and a half in land and money, continues:—'The legacies he has left are trifling, for, in truth, he cared for nobody; the words *give* and *bequeath* were too shocking to

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actor of truth and sincerity, he could occasionally lay them aside, to serve the purposes of his ambition or avarice.

He was once in the greatest point of view that ever I saw any subject in. When the Opposition, of which he was the leader in the House of Commons, prevailed at last against Sir Robert Walpole, he became the arbiter between the Crown and the people: the former imploring his protection, the latter his support. In that critical moment his various jarring passions were in the highest ferment, and for a while suspended his ruling one. Sense of shame made him hesitate at turning courtier on a sudden, after having acted the patriot so long, and with so much applause<sup>1</sup>; and his pride made him declare, that he would accept of no place, vainly imagining that he could by such a simulated and temporary self-denial preserve his popularity with the public, and his power at Court. He was mistaken in both. The King hated him almost as much for what he might have done, as for what he had done; and a motley ministry was formed, which by no means desired his company. The nation looked upon him as a deserter, and he shrunk into insignificancy and an earldom<sup>2</sup>.

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him to repeat, and so he left all in one word to his brother.'—*Letters*, iv. 210.

<sup>1</sup> It was the conduct of him and of men like him which made Johnson exclaim, 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.' Johnson, says Hawkins, 'had partaken of the short-lived joy that infatuated the public' when Walpole fell; but a few days convinced him that the patriotism of the Opposition had been either hatred or ambition.'—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ii. 348, n. 2. 'Pulteney,' he said, 'was as paltry a fellow as could be.'—*Ib.* v. 339.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson's Jacobite friend, Dr. King, says of Pulteney, on his being made Earl of Bath:—'He deserted the cause of his country; he betrayed

He

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He made several attempts afterwards to retrieve the opportunity he had lost, but in vain; his situation would not allow it. He was fixed in the House of Lords, that hospital of incurables; and his retreat to popularity was cut off: for the confidence of the public, when once great and once lost, is never to be regained. He lived afterwards in retirement with the wretched comfort of Horace's miser:

*Populus me sibilat*<sup>1</sup>, &c.

I may, perhaps, be suspected to have given too strong colouring to some features of this portrait; but I solemnly protest, that I have drawn it conscientiously, and to the best of my knowledge, from a very long acquaintance with, and observation of, the original. Nay, I have rather softened than heightened the colouring<sup>2</sup>.

### Sir Robert Walpole<sup>3</sup>.

I much question whether an impartial character of Sir Robert Walpole will or can be transmitted to posterity; for he governed this kingdom so long, that the various

his friends and adherents; he ruined his character, and from a most glorious eminence sunk down to a degree of contempt. The first time Sir Robert (who was now Earl of Orford) met him in the House of Lords, he threw out this reproach:—"My Lord Bath, you and I are now two as insignificant men as any in England."—King's *Anecdotes of his own Times*, p. 43.

<sup>1</sup> 'Populus me sibilat; at mihi plando  
Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemplor in arca.'

"Let them hiss on," he cries,  
"While in my own opinion fully blest,  
I count my money, and enjoy my chest."

Francis, *Horace*, 1 *Satires*, i. 66.

<sup>2</sup> 'Lord Chesterfield, with whom Mr. Pulteney lived in the most seeming intimacy, he mortally hated.'—Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*, i. 10.

<sup>3</sup> First Earl of Orford. Born 1676, died 1745.

passions

passions of mankind mingled, and in a manner incorporated themselves, with everything that was said or written concerning him. Never was man more flattered, nor more abused<sup>1</sup>; and his long power was probably the chief cause of both. I was much acquainted with him both in his public and his private life. I mean to do impartial justice to his character; and therefore my picture of him will, perhaps, be more like him, than it will be like any of the other pictures drawn of him<sup>2</sup>.

In private life he was good-natured, cheerful, social<sup>3</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, who had eagerly joined in the abuse, in later years said :— 'He was the best minister this country ever had, as, if *we* would have let him (he speaks of his own violent faction), he would have kept the country in perpetual peace.'—W. Seward's *Biographiana*, p. 554.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield was not likely to be an impartial judge, as he had been one of Walpole's strongest opponents. According to Horace Walpole he had paid his court to Mrs. Howard, the mistress of the Prince who afterwards became George II, while Walpole, seeing where the power would be lodged, had courted the wife. 'The Queen had an obscure window at St. James's, that looked into a dark passage, lighted only by a single lamp at night, which looked upon Mrs. Howard's apartment. Lord Chesterfield, one Twelfth Night at Court, had won so large a sum of money that he thought it imprudent to carry it home in the dark, and deposited it with the mistress. Thence the Queen inferred great intimacy, and thenceforwards he could obtain no favour from Court; and finding himself desperate went into Opposition. My father himself long afterwards told me the story, and had become the principal object of the peer's satiric wit, though he had not been the mover of his disgrace.'—Walpole's *Letters*, i. cxix.

<sup>3</sup> Pope thus describes him :—

'Seen him I have, but in his happier hour  
Of social pleasure, ill-exchang'd for pow'r;  
Seen him, uncumber'd with the venal tribe,  
Smile without art, and win without a bribe.'

*Epilogue to the Satires*, i. 29.

For the grossness of his talk and his justification for it, see Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, iii. 57.



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inelegant in his manners, loose in his morals. He had a coarse, strong wit, which he was too free of for a man in his station, as it is always inconsistent with dignity. He was very able as a minister, but without a certain elevation of mind necessary for great good, or great mischief. Profuse and appetent<sup>1</sup>, his ambition was subservient to his desire of making a great fortune<sup>2</sup>. He had more of the Mazarin than of the Richelieu. He would do mean things for profit, and never thought of doing great ones for glory<sup>3</sup>.

He was both the best Parliament-man, and the ablest manager of Parliament, that I believe ever lived. An artful rather than an eloquent speaker; he saw, as by intuition, the disposition of the House, and pressed or receded accordingly. So clear in stating the most intricate matters, especially in the finances, that, whilst he was speaking, the most ignorant thought that they understood what they really did not. Money, not prerogative, was the chief engine of his administration; and he employed it

<sup>1</sup> *Appetent* is not in Johnson's *Dictionary*, though the word is older than his time.

<sup>2</sup> 'He died £40,000 in debt. That was the wealth of a man that had been taxed as the plunderer of his country. Yet with all my adoration of my father I am just enough to own that it was his own fault if he died so poor. . . . His fondness for his paternal seat and his boundless generosity were too expensive for his fortune.'—Horace Walpole's *Letters*, viii. 423.

<sup>3</sup> 'Avarice seems to have been the predominant passion in Cardinal Mazarin, who did anything, submitted to anything, and forgave anything for the sake of plunder. He loved and courted power like an usurer, because it carried profit along with it. . . . On the contrary, Cardinal Richelieu's prevailing passion seems to have been ambition, and his immense riches only the natural consequences of that ambition gratified.'—Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, ii. 299.

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with a success which in a manner disgraced humanity. He was not, it is true, the inventor of that shameful method of governing which had been gaining ground insensibly ever since Charles II<sup>1</sup>, but with uncommon skill and unbounded profusion he brought it to that perfection, which at this time dishonours and distresses this country, and which (if not checked, and God knows how it can be now checked) must ruin it.

Besides this powerful engine of government, he had a most extraordinary talent of persuading and working men up to his purpose. A hearty kind of frankness, which sometimes seemed impudence, made people think that he let them into his secrets, whilst the impoliteness of his manners seemed to attest his sincerity. When he found anybody proof against pecuniary temptations, which, alas! was but seldom, he had recourse to a still worse art; for he laughed at and ridiculed all notions of public virtue, and the love of one's country, calling them 'The chimerical school-boy flights of classical learning;' declaring himself at the same time, 'No saint, no Spartan, no reformer.' He

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<sup>1</sup> Burnet, writing of the year 1690, says that 'by Sir John Trevor, the Speaker of the House of Commons, began the practice of buying off men.'—*History of His Own Times*, ed. 1818, iii. 46. According to Macaulay, Clifford had begun the practice in the days of the Cabal.—*History of England*, ed. 1874, v. 175. '*Quiescit non movere* was the maxim of Sir Robert Walpole. . . . My Quiet Statesman was called the Father of Corruption, though his political parents and children had been, and have been, full of the same blood.'—Walpole's *Letters*, viii. 337. In another letter, dated August 26, 1785, Horace Walpole, after mentioning 'the maxim ascribed to Sir Robert by his enemies, that *every man has his price*,' continues:—'The tariff of every Parliament since has been as well known as the price of beef and mutton.'—*Ib.* ix. 10.

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would frequently ask young fellows, at their first appearance in the world, while their honest hearts were yet untainted, 'Well, are you to be an old Roman? a patriot<sup>1</sup>? You will soon come off of that, and grow wiser.' And thus he was more dangerous to the morals than to the liberties of his country, to which I am persuaded he meant no ill in his heart.

He was the easy and profuse dupe of women, and in some instances indecently so<sup>2</sup>. He was excessively open to flattery, even of the grossest kind, and from the coarsest bunglers of that vile profession; which engaged him to pass most of his leisure and jovial hours with people whose blasted characters reflected upon his own. He was loved by many, but respected by none; his familiar and illiberal mirth and raillery leaving him no dignity. He was not vindictive, but on the contrary very placable to those who had injured him the most<sup>3</sup>. His good-humour, good-nature,

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<sup>1</sup> In a debate he once said:—'A patriot, Sir! why patriots spring up like mushrooms. I could raise fifty of them within the four-and-twenty hours. I have raised many of them in one night. It is but refusing to gratify an unreasonable or an insolent demand, and up starts a patriot. I have never been afraid of making patriots; but I disdain and despise all their efforts.'—Coxe's *Memoirs of Walpole*, i. 659.

The 'old Roman' we find in the following lines of Pope:—

'How can I Pult'ney, Chesterfield forget,  
While Roman spirit charms and Attic wit.'

*Epilogue to the Satires*, ii. 84.

<sup>2</sup> 'Walpole's prevailing weakness was to be thought to have a polite and happy turn to gallantry, of which he had undoubtedly less than any man living; it was his favourite and frequent subject of conversation; which proved to those who had any penetration that it was his prevailing weakness. And they applied to it with success.'—Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, i. 284.

<sup>3</sup> In the full rage of party strife, Chesterfield wrote of Walpole  
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and beneficence, in the several relations of father, husband, master, and friend, gained him the warmest affections of all within that circle.

His name will not be recorded in history among the 'best men,' or the 'best ministers'; but much less ought it to be ranked among the worst<sup>1</sup>.

### Lord Granville<sup>2</sup>.

Lord Granville had great parts, and a most uncommon share of learning for a man of quality<sup>3</sup>. He was one of the

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(Feb. 13, 1740):—"He carries his resentment to the highest degree, even against the memory of one who was but too long his friend, and too little a while his enemy."—Chesterfield's *Works*, iv. 223. 'Sir Robert Walpole was the minister who gave to our government that character of lenity which it has since generally preserved.'—Macaulay's *Essays*, ed. 1874, ii. 119.

<sup>1</sup> 'Lord Chesterfield, one of his sharpest enemies, has not, with all his prejudices, left a very unfavourable account of my father, and it would alone be raised by a comparison of their two characters. Think of one who calls Sir Robert the corrupter of youth leaving a system of education to poison them from their nursery! Chesterfield, Pulteney, and Bolingbroke were the saints that reviled my father.'—Walpole's *Letters*, vii. 143. 'In twenty years he never attempted a stretch of power, did nothing but the common business of administration, and by that temperance and steady virtue, and unalterable good-humour and superior wisdom, baffled all the efforts of faction.'—*Ib.* p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> John, Lord Carteret, afterwards Earl Granville. Born 1690, died 1763.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, speaking of the necessity for a man who would write well to begin to write soon, continued:—"As a proof of the justness of this remark, we may instance what is related of the great Lord Granville; that after he had written his letter, giving an account of the battle of Dettingen, he said, "Here is a letter, expressed in terms not good enough for a tallow-chandler to have used."—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, iv. 12. The letter, which is given in the *Gent. Mag.* 1743, p. 329, is modestly written, with only a few lines given to the King's part in the battle, and with no flattery. Horace Walpole, however, says that 'his express has been burlesqued a thousand ways.'—*Letters*, i. 256.

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best speakers in the House of Lords, both in the declamatory and the argumentative way<sup>1</sup>. He had a wonderful quickness and precision in seizing the stress of a question, which no art, no sophistry, could disguise to him. In business he was bold, enterprising, and overbearing. He had been bred up in high monarchical, that is, tyrannical, principles of government, which his ardent and imperious temper made him think were the only rational and practicable ones. He would have been a great first minister in France, little inferior, perhaps, to Richelieu; in this government, which is yet free, he would have been a dangerous one, little less so, perhaps, than Lord Strafford<sup>2</sup>. He was neither ill-natured nor vindictive, and had a great contempt for money<sup>3</sup>. His ideas were all above it. In social life he was

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<sup>1</sup> 'His eloquence was at once rapid and pompous, and by the mixture a little bombast. In one of his speeches upon Spain he said, "We were entering upon a war that would be stained with the blood of kings, and washed with the tears of queens." It was in ridicule of this rant that Sir Charles Williams, in an unfinished poem called the *Pandemonium*, where he introduced orations in the style of the chief speakers of the Opposition, concluded Lord Granville's with the following line, at the close of a prophetic view of the ravages of the war:—

"And visiers' heads came rolling down Constantinople's streets."

Walpole's *Memoirs of George II*, ed. 1822, i. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle describes him as if saying in his old age: 'A biggish life once mine, all futile for want of this same kingship like Pitt's.'—*History of Friedrich II*, ed. 1865, vi. 239. Earlier in the *History* he had written of him:—'None say Carteret did not do his trade, whatever it was, with a certain greatness,—at least, till habits of drinking rather took him.'—*Ib.* iii. 688.

<sup>3</sup> Chesterfield, in *Old England* (Feb. 5, 1743), had described him as 'possessing the lust of avarice without knowing the right use of power and riches.'—Chesterfield's *Works*, ii. 158.

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an agreeable, good-humoured, and instructive companion ; a great but entertaining talker.

He degraded himself by the vice of drinking, which, together with a great stock of Greek and Latin, he brought away with him from Oxford, and retained and practised ever afterwards<sup>1</sup>. By his own industry, he had made himself master of all the modern languages, and had acquired a great knowledge of the law. His political knowledge of the interest of princes and of commerce was extensive, and his notions were just and great. His character may be summed up, in nice precision, quick decision, and unbounded presumption<sup>2</sup>.

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### Mr. Pelham<sup>3</sup>.

Mr. Pelham had good sense, without either shining parts or any degree of literature. He had by no means an

<sup>1</sup> In 'a once celebrated tract, *An Apology for a Late Resignation*' (1748), in which Chesterfield is believed to have had a large share, Carteret is attacked in the passage which speaks of "the wild and drunken promise of a wild and drunken minister".—*Chesterfield's Works*, ed. by Mahon, v. 65. Horace Walpole, writing on Jan. 9, 1752, speaking of a christening, says that 'His Majesty and the Earl of [*sic*] Granville (if he is able to stand) and the Duchess of Somerset are to be sponsors.'—*Letters*, ii. 275. See *ib.* p. 8, where Walpole speaks of the House of Commons sending 'his Lordship to the Tower till he was sober.' Chesterfield speaks of 'that beastly degrading vice of drinking as the epidemical vice of colleges in general.'—*Works*, iv. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield wrote to his son on Dec. 13, 1762 :—'When Lord Granville dies, the ablest head in England dies too, take it for all in all.'—*Letters*, iv. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Pelham. Born 1695, died 1754. Chesterfield wrote to his son on March 8, 1754, a day or two after Pelham's death :—'I regret him as an old acquaintance, a pretty near relation, and a private man with whom I have lived many years in a social and friendly way. He

elevated

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elevated or enterprising genius, but had a more manly and steady resolution than his brother the Duke of Newcastle. He had a gentleman-like frankness in his behaviour, and as great a point of honour as a minister can have, especially a minister at the head of the treasury, where numberless sturdy and indefatigable beggars of condition apply, who cannot all be gratified, nor all with safety be refused.

He was a very inelegant speaker in Parliament, but spoke with a certain candour and openness that made him be well heard, and generally believed.

He wished well to the public, and managed the finances with great care and personal purity. He was *par negotiis neque supra*<sup>1</sup>: had many domestic virtues and no vices. If his place, and the power that accompanies it, made him some public enemies, his behaviour in both secured him from personal and rancorous ones. Those who wished him worst, only wished themselves in his place.

Upon the whole, he was an honourable man, and a well-wishing<sup>2</sup> minister.

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meaned well to the public, and was incorrupt in a post where corruption is commonly contagious. If he was no shining, enterprising minister, he was a safe one, which I like better.'—*Letters to his Son*, iv. 63. Horace Walpole, writing a day earlier, said:—'Mr. Pelham is dead! all that calm, that supineness, of which I have lately talked to you so much, is at an end! there is no heir to such luck as his. The whole people of England can never agree a second time upon the same person for the residence of infallibility.'—*Letters*, ii. 373. '“I shall now have no more peace,” the King said, with a sigh, being told of his minister's death.'—Walpole's *Reign of George II*, i. 378.

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Well-wisher* was a common enough word at this time, but *well-wishing* is, I think, uncommon.

Richard,

Richard, Earl of Scarborough<sup>1</sup>.

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In drawing the character of Lord Scarborough, I will be strictly upon my guard against the partiality of that intimate and unreserved friendship, in which we lived for more than twenty years ; to which friendship, as well as to the public notoriety of it, I owe much more than my pride will let my gratitude own. If this may be suspected to have biassed my judgment, it must, at the same time, be allowed to have informed it ; for the most secret movements of his soul were, without disguise, communicated to me only. However, I will rather lower than heighten the colouring ; I will mark the shades, and draw a credible rather than an exact likeness.

He had a very good person, rather above the middle size ; a handsome face, and, when he was cheerful, the most engaging countenance imaginable ; when grave, which

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Lumley, second Earl of Scarborough. Died 1740. This Character was written on August 29, 1759. Chesterfield wrote to Dr. Chenevix on Feb. 15, 1740 :—‘ We have both lost a good friend in Scarborough ; nobody can replace him to me. I wish I could replace him to you ; but, as things stand, I see no great hopes of it.’ Lord Mahon says in a note on this :—‘ Richard, second Earl of Scarborough, had been called to the House of Lords by writ in 1715, during his father’s life, and appointed one of the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George II. On Jan. 29, 1740, in a moment of mental alienation, he put a period to his own existence. [*Anglice* : in a fit of madness he made away with himself.]’—Chesterfield’s *Works*, ed. 1845, iii. 119. He was the son of Lord Lumley who commanded the body of soldiers who seized the Duke of Monmouth after Sedgemoor, and who three years later was one of the seven chiefs of the conspiracy who signed in cipher the invitation to the Prince of Orange.—Macaulay’s *History of England*, ed. 1874, ii. 195 ; iii. 147.



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he was oftenest, the most respectable one<sup>1</sup>. He had in the highest degree the air, manners, and address of a man of quality ; politeness with ease, and dignity without pride.

Bred in camps and courts, it cannot be supposed that he was untainted with the fashionable vices of these warm climates ; but (if I may be allowed the expression) he dignified them<sup>2</sup>, instead of their degrading him into any mean or indecent action. He had a good degree of classical, and a great one of modern, knowledge ; with a just, and, at the same time, a delicate taste.

In his common expenses he was liberal within bounds ; but in his charities and bounties he had none. I have known them put him to some present inconveniences.

He was a strong, but not an eloquent or florid, speaker in Parliament. He spoke so unaffectedly the honest dictates of his heart, that truth and virtue, which never want, and seldom wear, ornaments, seemed only to borrow his voice. This gave such an astonishing weight to all he said, that he more than once carried an unwilling majority after him. Such is the authority of unsuspected virtue, that it will sometimes shame vice into decency at least.

He was not only offered, but pressed to accept, the post of Secretary of State ; but he constantly refused it. I once tried to persuade him to accept it ; but he told me that both the natural warmth and the melancholy of his temper

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<sup>1</sup> *Respectable* meant 'venerable ; meriting respect,' and was at this time a term of high praise. It is not in the early editions of Johnson's *Dictionary*, and had, I suppose, been only lately introduced from the French. See Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, iii. 241, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 37.

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made him unfit for it ; and that, moreover, he knew very well that, in those ministerial employments, the course of business made it necessary to do many hard things, and some unjust ones, which could only be authorised by the Jesuitical casuistry of the direction of the intention ; a doctrine which he said he could not possibly adopt. Whether he was the first that ever made that objection, I cannot affirm ; but I suspect that he will be the last.

He was a true constitutional, and yet practicable<sup>1</sup>, patriot ; a sincere lover and a zealous assertor of the natural, the civil, and the religious rights of his country. But he would not quarrel with the Crown for some slight stretches of the prerogative ; nor with the people for some unwary ebullitions of liberty ; nor with anyone for a difference of opinion in speculative points. He considered the Constitution in the aggregate, and only watched that no one part of it should preponderate too much.

His moral character was so pure, that if one may say of that imperfect creature man, what a celebrated historian says of Scipio, *nil non laudandum aut dixit, aut fecit, aut sensit*, I sincerely think (I had almost said I know) one might say it with great truth of him, one single instance excepted, which shall be mentioned.

He joined to the noblest and strictest principles of honour and generosity the tenderest sentiments of benevolence and compassion ; and as he was naturally warm, he could not even hear of an injustice or a baseness without a sudden indignation ; nor of the misfortunes or

<sup>1</sup> This use of *practicable* is not in accordance with the definitions and examples of it in Johnson's *Dictionary*.

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miseries of a fellow-creature, without melting into softness, and endeavouring to relieve them. This part of his character was so universally known, that our best and most satirical English poet says :

‘ When I confess, there is who feels for fame,  
And melts to goodness, need I Scarborough name ? ’

He had not the least pride of birth and rank, that common narrow notion of little minds, that wretched mistaken succedaneum of merit ; but he was jealous to anxiety of his character, as all men are who deserve a good one. And such was his diffidence upon that subject, that he never could be persuaded that mankind really thought of him as they did. For surely never man had a higher reputation, and never man enjoyed a more universal esteem. Even knaves respected him ; and fools thought they loved him. If he had any enemies (for I protest I never knew one), they could only be such as were weary of always hearing of Aristides the Just.

He was too subject to sudden gusts of passion, but they never hurried him into any illiberal or indecent expression or action ; so invincibly habitual to him were good-nature and good-manners. But, if ever any word happened to fall from him in warmth, which upon subsequent reflection he himself thought too strong, he was never easy till he had made more than a sufficient atonement for it.

He had a most unfortunate, I will call it a most fatal, kind of melancholy in his nature, which often made him

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<sup>1</sup> *Epilogue to the Satires*, ii. 65. The fact that Mr. Mark Pattison in his excellent edition of the *Satires* passes over Lord Scarborough’s name without a note, shows how little is known of him.

both

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both absent and silent in company, but never morose or sour. At other times he was a cheerful and agreeable companion ; but, conscious that he was not always so, he avoided company too much, and was too often alone, giving way to a train of gloomy reflections.

His constitution, which was never robust, broke rapidly at the latter end of his life. He had two severe strokes of apoplexy or palsy, which considerably affected his body and his mind. This, added to his natural melancholy, made him put an end to himself in the — year of his age.

I desire that this may not be looked upon as a full and finished character, writ for the sake of writing it ; but as my solemn deposition of the truth to the best of my knowledge. I owed this small tribute of justice, such as it is, to the memory of the best man I ever knew, and of the dearest friend I ever had.

### Lord Hardwicke <sup>1</sup>.

Lord Hardwicke was, perhaps, the greatest magistrate that this country ever had. He presided in the Court of Chancery above twenty years, and in all that time none of his decrees were reversed, nor the justness of them ever questioned<sup>2</sup>. Though avarice was his ruling passion, he

<sup>1</sup> Philip Yorke, first Earl of Hardwicke. Born 1690, died March 6, 1764. He was Lord Chancellor from February, 1737, to November, 1756.

<sup>2</sup> 'We are now to see him in his glory as an Equity Judge. . . . Viewed as a magistrate sitting on his tribunal to administer justice, I believe that his fame has not been exceeded by that of any man in ancient or modern times. . . . I hardly think it worth while to mention the statement which is so much harped upon by the common herd of Lord Hardwicke's petty biographers, that only three of his decrees were

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was never in the least suspected of any kind of corruption : a rare and meritorious instance of virtue and self-denial, under the influence of such a craving, insatiable, and increasing, passion.

He had great and clear parts ; understood, loved, and cultivated, the *belles lettres*. He was an agreeable, eloquent speaker in Parliament, but not without some little tincture of the pleader.

Men are apt to mistake, or at least to seem to mistake, their own talents, in hopes, perhaps, of misleading others to allow them that which they are conscious they do not possess. Thus Lord Hardwicke valued himself more upon being a great minister of State, which he certainly was not, than upon being a great magistrate, which he certainly was<sup>1</sup>.

All his notions were clear, but none of them great. Good order and domestic details<sup>2</sup> were his proper department. The great and shining parts of government, though not above his parts to conceive, were above his timidity to undertake.

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appealed against, and that in each of these cases the decree was affirmed. The truth is, that during the whole of his time, through management which I shall afterwards have to consider, he was the sole Law Lord, and substantially the Chancery was a Court of the last resort.'—Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, ed. 1846, v. 43, 49.

<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole in 1742 quotes a ballad in which is the following verse :—

'And as miser Hardwicke with all Courts will draw,  
He too may remain, but shall stick to his law ;  
For of foreign affairs, when he talks like a fool,  
I'll laugh in his face, and will cry "go to school."'

*Letters*, i. 209.

<sup>2</sup> By *domestic details* he means, I conjecture, what we now call *home affairs* in opposition to *foreign affairs*.

By

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By great and lucrative employments, during the course of thirty years, and by still greater parsimony, he acquired an immense fortune, and established his numerous family in advantageous posts and profitable alliances<sup>1</sup>.

Though he had been Solicitor and Attorney-General, he was by no means what is called a prerogative lawyer. He loved the Constitution, and maintained the just prerogative of the Crown, but without stretching it to the oppression of the people.

He was naturally humane, moderate, and decent; and when by his former employments he was obliged to prosecute State criminals, he discharged that duty in a very different manner from most of his predecessors, who were too justly called the 'Blood-hounds of the Crown'<sup>2</sup>.

He was a cheerful and instructive companion, humane in his nature, decent in his manners, unstained with any vice (avarice excepted), a very great magistrate, but by no means a great minister.

<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole wrote soon after the trial of the rebel Scotch peers in 1746, at which Lord Hardwicke had presided:—'My Lord Chancellor has had a thousand pounds in present for his High Stewardship, and has got the reversion of Clerk of the Crown [£1200 a year] for his second clerk. What a long time it will be before his posterity are drove into rebellion for want, like Lord Kilmarnock.'—*Letters*, ii. 46. On Nov. 4, 1760, he wrote:—'King George II is dead, richer than Sir Robert Brown, though perhaps not so rich as my Lord Hardwicke.'—*Ib.* iii. 358. 'He had,' writes Lord Campbell, 'no retired allowance, but besides his own immense fortune, not only his sons, but all his kith, kin, and dependents were saturated with places, pensions, and reversions.'—*Lives of the Chancellors*, ed. 1846, v. 139.

<sup>2</sup> He did not show the same humanity as Lord High Steward. 'To the prisoners he was peevish; and instead of keeping up to the humane dignity of the law of England, whose character it is to point out favour to the criminal, he crossed them, and almost scolded at any offer they

Duke

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### Duke of Newcastle<sup>1</sup>.

The Duke of Newcastle will be so often mentioned in the history of these times, and with so strong a bias either for or against him, that I resolved, for the sake of truth, to draw his character with my usual impartiality: for as he had been a minister for above forty years together, and in the last ten years of that period first minister, he had full time to oblige one half of the nation, and to offend the other.

We were co-temporaries, near relations, and familiar acquaintances, sometimes well and sometimes ill together, according to the several variations of political affairs, which know no relations, friends, or acquaintances.

The public opinion put him below his level: for though he had no superior parts, or eminent talents, he had a most indefatigable industry, a perseverance, a Court craft, and a servile compliance with the will of his Sovereign for the time being; which qualities, with only a common share of common sense, will carry a man sooner and more safely through the dark labyrinths of a Court, than the most shining parts would do without those meaner talents<sup>2</sup>.

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made towards defence.'—Walpole's *Letters*, ii. 39. Walpole describes him and Lord Mansfield as 'pleading against Admiral Byng in the House of Lords like little attorneys, and doing all they could to stifle truth.'—*Ib.* iii. 65. He repeats these charges in his *Memoirs of George II*, ed. 1822, i. 138. Lord Campbell says that the execution of Charles Radcliffe in 1747, on a sentence passed against him in 1715, 'reflects great disgrace upon Lord Hardwicke.'—*Lives of the Chancellors*, v. 108.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Pelham Holles, Duke of Newcastle. Born 1693, died 1768. This Character was written in the year 1763.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield wrote to his son on June 26, 1752:—'Direct your  
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He was good-natured to a degree of weakness, even to tears, upon the slightest occasions. Exceedingly timorous<sup>1</sup>, both personally and politically, dreading the least innovation, and keeping, with a scrupulous timidity, in the beaten track of business as having the safest bottom.

I will mention one instance of this disposition, which I think will set it in the strongest light. When I brought the bill into the House of Lords, for correcting and amending the calendar<sup>2</sup>, I gave him previous notice of my intentions. He was alarmed at so bold an undertaking, and conjured me *not to stir matters* that had been long quiet; adding, that he did not love *new-fangled things*. I did not,

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principal battery at Hanover at the Duke of Newcastle's; there are many very weak places in that citadel. . . . In one thing alone do not humour him; I mean drinking.'—*Letters to his Son*, iii. 325.

<sup>1</sup> 'Fear, a ridiculous fear, was predominant in him. He never lay in a room alone; when the Duchess was ill, his footman lay in a pallet by him.'—Horace Walpole's *Memoirs of George II*, ed. 1822, i. 144. Walpole in one of his *Letters* (iii. 66) calls him 'the aspen Duke of Newcastle.'

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield describes this bill in his *Letter to his Son* of Feb. 28, March 18, 1751. He writes:—'I determined, therefore, to attempt the reformation; I consulted the best lawyers, and the most skilful astronomers, and we cooked up a bill for that purpose. But then my difficulty began: I was to bring in this bill, which was necessarily composed of law jargon and astronomical calculations, to both which I am an utter stranger. However, it was absolutely necessary to make the House of Lords think that I knew something of the matter, and also to make them believe that they knew something of it themselves, which they do not. . . . I was particularly attentive to the choice of my words, to the harmony and roundness of my periods, to my elocution, to my action. This succeeded, and ever will succeed; they thought I informed because I pleased them; and many of them said that I had made the whole very clear to them; when, God knows, I had not even attempted it.'—*Letters to his Son*, iii. 144.

however,



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however, yield to the cogency of these arguments, but brought in the bill, and it passed unanimously. From such weaknesses it necessarily follows that he could have no great ideas, nor elevation of mind.

His ruling, or rather his only, passion was the agitation, the bustle, and the hurry of business; to which he had been accustomed above forty years; but he was as dilatory in despatching it as he was eager to engage in it. He was always in a hurry, never walked, but always ran; insomuch that I have sometimes told him, that by his fleetness one should rather take him for the courier than the author of the letters<sup>1</sup>.

\* \* \* \* \*

His levees were his pleasure, and his triumph; he loved to have them crowded, and consequently they were so. There he generally made people of business wait two or three hours in the ante-chamber, while he trifled away that time with some insignificant favourites in his closet. When at last he came into his levee-room, he accosted, hugged, embraced, and promised, everybody, with a seeming cordiality, but at the same time with an illiberal and degrading familiarity<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 'The hurry and confusion of the Duke of Newcastle do not proceed from his business, but from his want of method in it. Sir Robert Walpole, who had ten times the business to do, was never seen in a hurry, because he always did it with method.'—*Letters to his Son*, iv. 59. Lord Hervey in his *Memoirs* (ii. 70) describes the Duke on one occasion as 'more busily troublesome, more ministerially important, more haughtily familiar, more oppressively talkative, and more noisily glad than even he had ever before appeared upon any other occurrence.'

<sup>2</sup> Horace Walpole thus describes his behaviour when, on the death of his brother Henry Pelham, he was made Prime Minister:—'On Friday this august remnant of the Pelhams went to Court for the first time. At

He

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He was exceedingly disinterested, very profuse of his own fortune, and abhorring all those means, too often used by persons in his station, either to gratify their avarice, or to supply their prodigality; for he retired from business in the year 1762, above four hundred thousand pounds poorer than when he first engaged in it<sup>1</sup>.

the foot of the stairs he cried and sunk down; the yeomen of the guard were forced to drag him up under the arms. When the closet-door opened, he flung himself at his length at the King's feet, sobbed, and cried, "God bless your Majesty! God preserve your Majesty!" and lay there howling and embracing the King's knees, with one foot so extended that my Lord Coventry, who was *luckily* in waiting, and begged the standers-by to retire, with "For God's sake, gentlemen, don't look at a great man in distress," endeavouring to shut the door, caught his Grace's foot, and made him roar out with pain.—*Letters*, ii. 376. Smollett, in *Humphry Clinker*, humorously ridicules the Duke at one of his levees. 'A door opening, he suddenly bolted out, with a shaving cloth under his chin, his face frothed up to the eyes with soap-lather; and running up to the Algerine ambassador, grinned hideous in his face, "My dear Mahomet (said he), God love your long beard; I hope the Dey will make you a horse-tail at the next promotion, ha, ha, ha!—Have but a moment's patience, and I'll send to you in a twinkling." So saying he retreated into his den, leaving the Turk in some confusion. After a short pause, however, he said something to his interpreter, the meaning of which I had great curiosity to know, as he turned up his eyes while he spoke, expressing astonishment mixed with devotion. . . He had mistaken his Grace for the minister's fool, but was no sooner undeceived by the interpreter than he exclaimed to this effect:—"Holy prophet! I don't wonder that this nation prospers, seeing it is governed by the counsel of idiots," a series of men whom all good Mussulmen revere as the organs of immediate inspiration.'—*Humphry Clinker*, ed. 1792, i. 238. 'Walpole,' says Macaulay, 'played at cards with countesses and corresponded with ambassadors. Smollett passed his life surrounded by printers' devils and famished scribblers. Yet Walpole's Duke and Smollett's Duke are as like as if they were both from one hand.'—Macaulay's *Essays*, ed. 1874, ii. 141.

<sup>1</sup> Chesterfield wrote on Nov. 21, 1768:—"My old kinsman and contemporary is at last dead, and for the first time quiet. . . I own

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Upon the whole, he was a compound of most human weaknesses, but untainted with any vice or crime.

### Duke of Bedford<sup>1</sup>.

The Duke of Bedford was more considerable for his rank and immense fortune, than for either his parts or his virtues.

He had rather more than a common share of common-sense, but with a head so wrong-turned, and so invincibly obstinate, that the share of parts which he had was of little use to him, and very troublesome to others.

He was passionate, though obstinate<sup>2</sup>; and, though both, was always governed by some low dependants, who had art enough to make him believe that he governed them<sup>3</sup>.

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I feel for his death, not because it will be my turn next, but because I knew him to be very good-natured, and his hands to be extremely clean, and even too clean, if that were possible; for after all the great offices which he had held for fifty years, he died three hundred thousand pounds poorer than he was when he first came into them. A very unministerial proceeding! — *Works*, iv. 365. 'There was no expense,' writes Horace Walpole, 'to which he was not addicted, but generosity. His house, gardens, table, and equipage swallowed immense treasures; the sums he owed were only exceeded by those he wasted.' — *Memoirs of George II*, i. 144.

<sup>1</sup> John Russell, fourth Duke of Bedford. Born 1710, died 1771.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterfield said that he was 'too obstinate to forgive or forget the least injury.' — Chesterfield's *Works*, ed. by Mahon, iii. 341. Horace Walpole describes him as 'bouncing like a rocket and frightening away poor Sir George Lyttelton.' — *Letters*, ii. 411. When in 1762 he was sent to France as Ambassador Extraordinary, Walpole wrote: — 'The Duke of Bedford is gone in a fury to make peace, for he cannot be even pacific with temper.' — *Ib.* iv. 19.

<sup>3</sup> For 'the Bedfords, or, as they were called by their enemies, the Bloomsbury gang,' see Macaulay's *Essays*, ed. 1874, iv. 265.

His

His manners and address were exceedingly illiberal; he had neither the talent nor the desire of pleasing.

In speaking in the House, he had an inelegant flow of words, but not without some reasoning, matter, and method.

He had no amiable qualities; but he had no vicious nor criminal ones: he was much below shining, but above contempt in any character.

In short, he was a Duke of a respectable family, and with a very great estate<sup>1</sup>.

### Mr. Fox<sup>2</sup>.

Mr. Henry Fox was a younger brother of the lowest extraction<sup>3</sup>. His father, Sir Stephen Fox, made a consider-

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<sup>1</sup> 'He was a man of inflexible honesty and goodwill to his country; his great economy was called avarice; if it was so, it was blended with more generosity and goodness than that passion will commonly unite with.'—Walpole's *Memoirs of George II*, i. 162. For *respectable* see *ante*, p. 216, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Fox, first Lord Holland. Born 1705, died 1774.

<sup>3</sup> We see in this insolent account of Fox's origin, how haughty a man Chesterfield really was, in spite of his affected contempt of birth. So early as 1655 Lord Clarendon praised Fox's father as 'very well qualified with languages, and all other parts of clerkship, honesty, and discretion that were necessary for the discharge of such a trust' as managing the expenses of the exiled Court.—*History of the Rebellion*, ed. 1826, vii. 89. In 1660 Pepys speaks of him as 'a very fine gentleman.'—Pepys's *Diary*, ed. 1851, i. 91. Evelyn, writing of him in 1680, says that 'he is generous, and lives very honourably, of a sweet nature, well-spoken, well-bred, and is so highly in his Majesty's esteem, and so useful, that being long since made a knight, he is also advanced to be one of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury.'—Evelyn's *Diary*, ed. 1872, ii. 156. In 1697 the balance long hung between him and Charles Montague as to which should be First Lord of the Treasury.—Macaulay's *History of England*, ed. 1874, vii. 412. Horace Walpole calls him 'a footman' (*Letters*, i. 303), but Horace Walpole was as insolent as Chesterfield. According to Evelyn, 'he came first a poor boy from the choir of Salisbury.'

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able fortune, somehow or other, and left him a fair younger brother's portion, which he soon spent in the common vices of youth, gaming included: this obliged him to travel for some time.

\* \* \* \* \*

When he returned, though by education a Jacobite, he attached himself to Sir Robert Walpole, and was one of his ablest *élèves*. He had no fixed principles either of religion or morality, and was too unwary in ridiculing and exposing them.

He had very great abilities and indefatigable industry in business, great skill in managing, that is, in corrupting the House of Commons, and a wonderful dexterity in attaching individuals to himself. He promoted, encouraged, and practised their vices; he gratified their avarice, or supplied their profusion. He wisely and punctually performed whatever he promised, and most liberally rewarded their attachment and dependance. By these and all other means that can be imagined, he made himself many personal friends and political dependants.

He was a most disagreeable speaker in Parliament, inelegant in his language, hesitating and ungraceful in his elocution, but skilful in discerning the temper of the House, and in knowing when and how to press, or to yield<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Fox, with a great hesitation in his elocution and a barrenness of expression, had conquered these impediments and the prejudices they had raised against his speaking, by a vehemence of reasoning and closeness of argument that beat all the orators of his time. His spirit, his steadiness and humanity, procured him strong attachments. . . . Fox always spoke to the question, Pitt to the passions; Fox to carry the question, Pitt to raise himself; Fox pointed out, Pitt lashed the errors of his antagonists.'—Walpole's *Memoirs of George II*, i. 81.

A constant

A constant good-humour and seeming frankness made him a welcome companion in social life, and in all domestic relations he was good-natured. As he advanced in life, his ambition became subservient to his avarice. His early profusion and dissipation had made him feel the many inconveniences of want, and, as it often happens, carried him to the contrary and worse extreme of corruption and rapine<sup>1</sup>. *Rem, quocunque modo rem*<sup>2</sup>, became his maxim, which he observed (I will not say religiously and scrupulously), but invariably and shamefully.

He had not the least notion of, or regard for, the public good or the Constitution, but despised those cares as the objects of narrow minds, or the pretences of interested ones: and he lived, as Brutus died, calling virtue only a name<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> According to Horace Walpole, though shortly before his death he had given his son, the famous Charles Fox, a draft for £100,000 in payment of his debts, he left £10,000 a year to his eldest son, and large legacies to his two other sons.—Walpole's *Letters*, vi. 24, 99. For Macaulay's character of him see his *Essays*, ed. 1874, ii. 172.

<sup>2</sup> 'Isne tibi melius suadet qui "rem facias; rem  
Si possis recte; si non, quocunque modo rem?"'

'Who counsels best? who whispers, "Be but great,  
With praise or infamy leave that to fate;  
Get place and wealth, if possible, with grace;  
If not, by any means get wealth and place."'

Horace, 1 *Epist.* i. 64. Pope, *Imitations*, l. 101.

<sup>3</sup> 'Casting his eyes upon the heavens which were covered with stars, Brutus repeated two verses, one of which (Volumnius informs us) was this:—

"Forgive not, Jove, the cause of this distress."

The other, he says, had escaped his memory.' In a note it is said that 'the verse forgotten was to the purport of *Non in re, sed in verbo tantum, esse virtutem*.'—Langhorne's *Plutarch*, ed. 1809, v. 468.

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### Mr. Pitt<sup>1</sup>.

Mr. Pitt owed his rise to the most considerable posts and power in this kingdom singly to his own abilities. In him they supplied the want of birth and fortune, which latter in others too often supply the want of the former. He was a younger brother of a very new family, and his fortune only an annuity of one hundred pounds a year.

The army was his original destination, and a cornetcy of horse his first and only commission in it. Thus unassisted by favour or fortune, he had no powerful protector to introduce him into business, and (if I may use that expression) to do the honours of his parts ; but their own strength was fully sufficient.

His constitution refused him the usual pleasures, and his genius forbad him the idle dissipations, of youth ; for so early as at the age of sixteen he was the martyr of an hereditary gout. He therefore employed the leisure, which that tedious and painful distemper either procured or allowed him, in acquiring a great fund of premature and useful knowledge. Thus, by the unaccountable relation of causes and effects, what seemed the greatest misfortune of his life was, perhaps, the principal cause of its splendour.

His private life was stained by no vices, nor sullied by any meanness. All his sentiments were liberal and elevated. His ruling passion was an unbounded ambition, which, when supported by great abilities, and crowned with great

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<sup>1</sup> William Pitt, first Earl of Chatham. Born 1708, died 1778. This Character was written in 1762.

success,

success, make<sup>1</sup> what the world calls 'a great man.' He was haughty, imperious, impatient of contradiction, and over-bearing; qualities which too often accompany, but always clog, great ones.

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He had manners and address; but one might discern through them too great a consciousness of his own superior talents. He was a most agreeable and lively companion in social life, and had such a versatility of wit, that he could adapt it to all sorts of conversation<sup>2</sup>. He had also a most happy turn to poetry<sup>3</sup>, but he seldom indulged, and seldom avowed it.

He came young into Parliament, and upon that great theatre soon equalled the oldest and the ablest actors. His eloquence was of every kind, and he excelled in the argumentative as well as in the declamatory way<sup>4</sup>. But his invectives were terrible, and uttered with such energy of diction, and stern dignity of action and countenance, that he intimidated those who were the most willing and the

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this error in grammar is due to the copyist or printer, but Chesterfield is not always grammatical.

<sup>2</sup> 'His conversation was affected and unnatural, his manner not engaging, nor his talents adapted to a country where ministers must court if they would be courted.'—Walpole's *Memoirs of George II*, ed. 1822, i. 80.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Garrick Correspondence*, i. 459, is given a very poor copy of verses addressed by him to Garrick.

<sup>4</sup> 'Bitter satire was his fort; when he attempted ridicule, which was very seldom, he succeeded happily; when he attempted to reason, poorly. . . . Eloquence as an art was but little studied by Pitt; the beauties of language were a little, and but a little, more cultivated, except by him and his family. Yet the grace and force of words were so natural to him, that when he avoided them he almost lost all excellence.'—Walpole's *Memoirs of George II*, i. 80, 486.



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best able to encounter him. Their arms fell out of their hands, and they shrunk under the ascendant<sup>1</sup> which his genius gained over theirs.

In that assembly, where the public good is so much talked of, and private interest singly pursued, he set out with acting the patriot, and performed that part so nobly, that he was adopted by the public as their chief, or rather only unsuspected, champion<sup>2</sup>.

The weight of his popularity, and his universally acknowledged abilities, obtruded him upon King George II, to whom he was personally obnoxious. He was made Secretary of State : in this difficult and delicate situation, which one would have thought must have reduced either the patriot or the minister to a decisive option, he managed with such ability, that, while he served the King more effectually, in his most unwarrantable Electoral views<sup>3</sup>, than any former minister, however willing, had dared to do, he still preserved all his credit and popularity with the public ; whom he assured and convinced, that the protection and defence of Hanover, with an army of seventy-five thousand men in British pay, was the only possible method

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<sup>1</sup> Burke makes use of this term of the astrologers in that splendid passage in which he tells of the setting of Chatham and of the rise of Charles Townshend. 'For even then, Sir, even before this splendid orb was entirely set, and while the Western horizon was in a blaze with his descending glory, on the opposite quarter of the heavens arose another luminary, and, for his hour, became lord of the ascendant.'—Burke's *Works*, ed. by E. J. Payne, i. 146.

<sup>2</sup> 'Under him for the first time administration and popularity were seen united.'—Burke, in the *Annual Register*, 1761, i. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Views, that is to say, as Elector of Hanover.

of securing our possessions or acquisitions in North America<sup>1</sup>. So much easier is it to deceive than to undeceive mankind.

His own disinterestedness, and even contempt of money, smoothed his way to power, and prevented or silenced a great share of that envy which commonly attends it. Most men think that they have an equal natural right to riches, and equal abilities to make the proper use of them; but not very many of them have the impudence to think themselves qualified for power.

Upon the whole, he will make a great and shining figure in the annals of this country, notwithstanding the blot which his acceptance of three thousand pounds *per annum* pension for three lives, on his voluntary resignation of the seals in the first year of the present King, must make in his character, especially as to the disinterested part of it<sup>2</sup>. However, it must be acknowledged that he had those qualities which none but a great man can have, with a mixture of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Lord Chatham,' writes Walpole, 'boasted of having conquered America in Germany.'—Walpole's *Letters*, vi. 319, n. 2. It was from the French that America was conquered, and this was done, Chatham meant to say, by fighting them in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Horace Walpole wrote on October 12, 1761, to his cousin, Henry Conway:—'I have been the dupe of Mr. Pitt's disinterestedness. Oh, my dear Harry, I beg you on my knees, keep your virtue; do not think there is still one man upon earth who despises money. I wrote you an account last week of his resignation. Could you have believed that in four days he would have tumbled from the conquest of Spain to receiving a quarter's pension from Mr. West [the Secretary to the Treasury]? . . . Delaval says if he had gone into the City, told them he had a poor wife and children unprovided for, and had opened a subscription, he would have got five hundred thousand pounds, instead of three thousand pounds a year.'—*Letters*, iii. 453.

those

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those failings which are the common lot of wretched and imperfect human nature<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, nine years after this Character was written, says of Chatham that 'it will be happy for him if the nation shall at last dismiss him to nameless obscurity, with that equipoise of blame and praise which Corneille allows to Richelieu.'—Johnson's *Works*, vi. 197. Hume, the same year, wrote :—'I think that Mr. Johnson is a great deal too favourable to Pitt, in comparing him to Cardinal Richelieu. The Cardinal had certainly great talents besides his audacity ; the other is totally destitute of literature, sense, or the knowledge of any one branch of public business. What other talent, indeed, has he but that of reciting with tolerable action and great impudence a long discourse in which there is neither argument, order, instruction, propriety, or even grammar? Not to mention that the Cardinal, with his inveterate enmities, was also capable of friendship, while our cut-throat never felt either the one sentiment or the other.'—Hume's *Letters to Strahan*, p. 185. 'The cut-throat' of Hume is the 'clarum et venerabile nomen' of Burke ; who three years later, speaking of Chatham, says :—'The venerable age of this great man, his merited rank, his superior eloquence\*, his splendid qualities, his eminent services, the vast space he fills in the eye of mankind ; and, more than all the rest, his fall from power, which, like death, canonizes and sanctifies a great character, will not suffer me to censure any part of his conduct.'—Burke's *Works*, ed. by E. J. Payne, i. 144. On the day of his death Horace Walpole wrote :—'Well ! with all his defects Lord Chatham will be a capital historic figure ; France dreaded his crutch to this very moment.'—*Letter*, vii. 60.

\* 'Superior eloquence' to our ear sounds weak, but Chesterfield uses the same term in speaking of the same orator.—*Ante*, p. 113.

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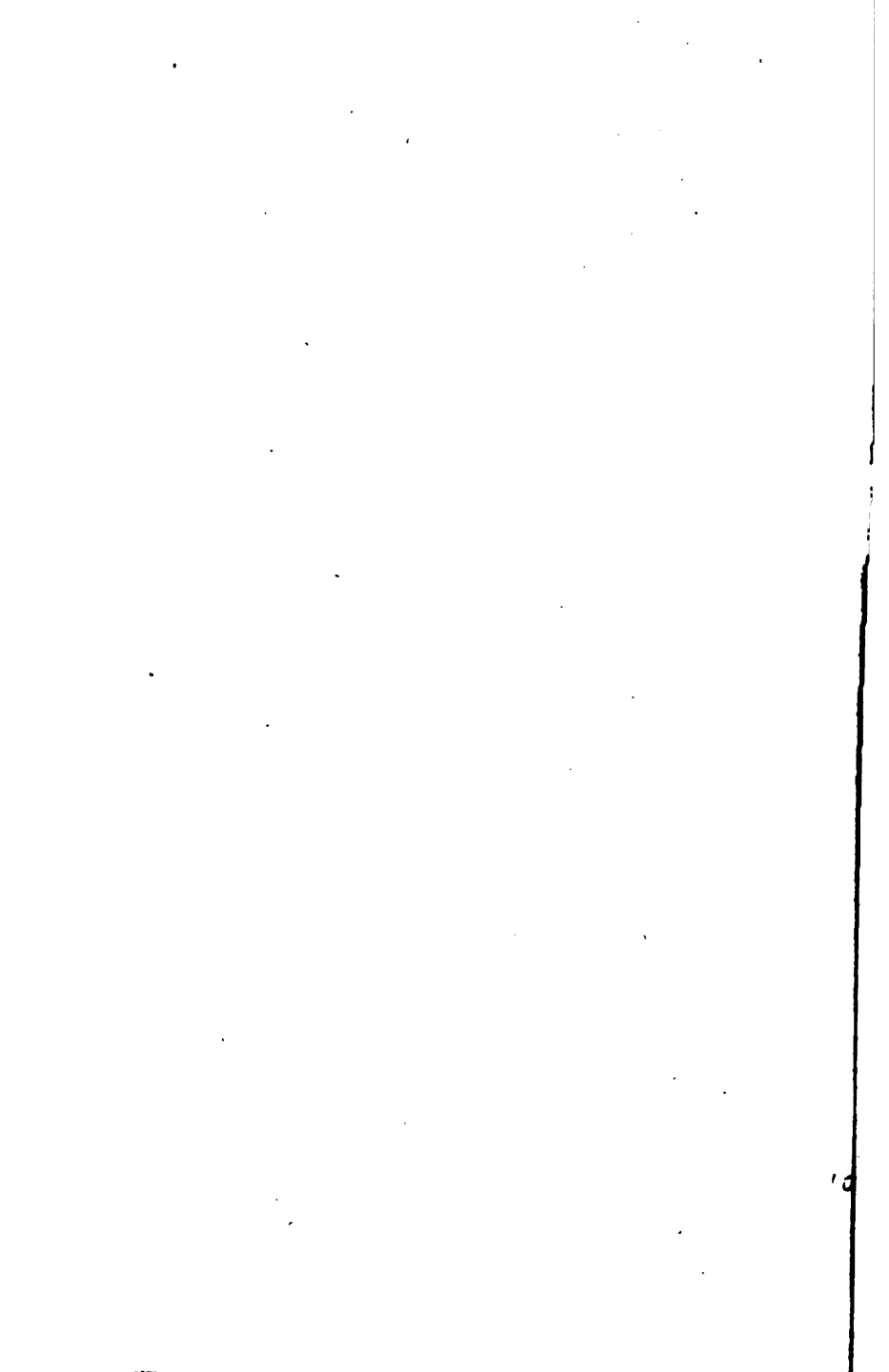
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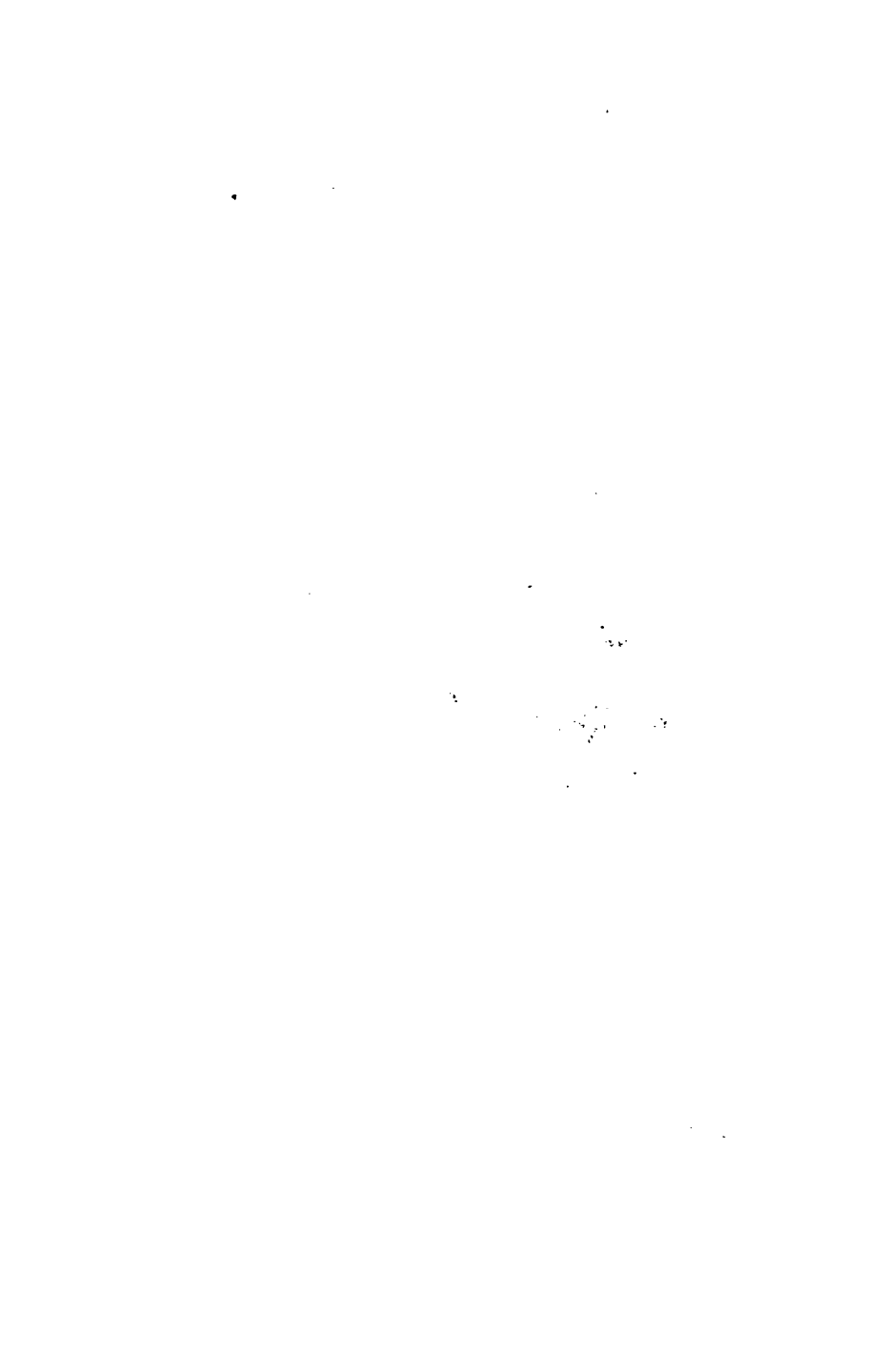
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